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Fall No. 10

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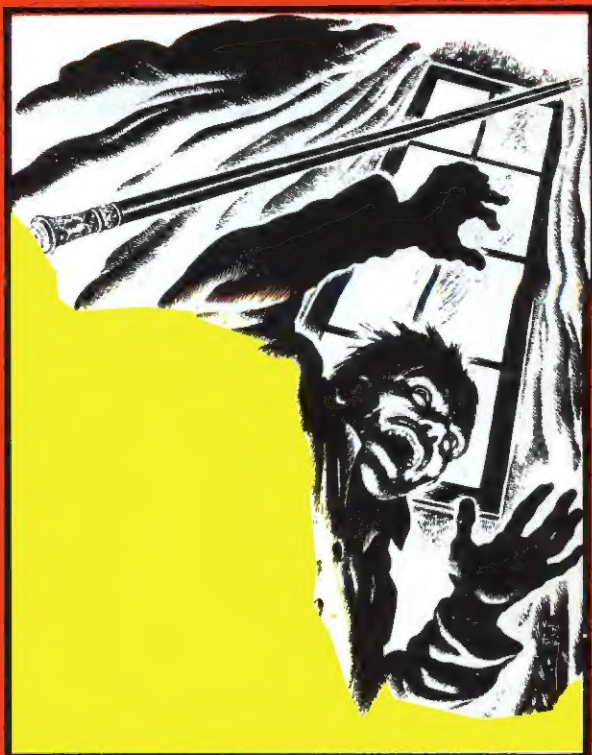
by SEABURY
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THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING DEAD

by HAROLD WARD



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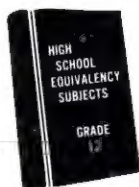
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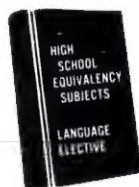
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STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

Volume 2

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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the editor's page

It may not be universally agreed, but surely there is a fair enough body of agreement that (William) Sherlock (Scott) Holmes was born on Friday, January 6, 1854 at the farmstead of Mycroft in the North Riding of Yorkshire, England—according to his noted contemporary biographer, the late W. S. Baring-Gould. (See *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street*, by W. S. Baring-Gould, Popular Library SP211.) Both actual and spiritual members of the Baker Street Irregulars and similar societies celebrated the Master's 114th birthday this year.

Unfortunately, we do not have any particularly exciting Holmesian event of which 1968 could be the centenary; Mr. Gould lists as the important activities of 1868, young Holmes' trip to St. Malo with his father, Siger, and his mother, Violet, in September; in October, they arrived in Pau, and this would be the last Continental visit he would make with his parents. However, two considerable benefits came from it, as the elder Holmes undertook to teach his son the "manly art" (boxing) and also enrolled him in the most celebrated fencing school in Europe—the salon of Maître Alphonse Benzin.

The reason for this brief investigation was to see if there might be any particular reason for the issuance, in 1968, of *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* beyond the fact that

it was ready for release at this time; perhaps it is greedy of me to ask for more, for this is a publishing venture almost worthy of a centennial in itself. Published by Clarkson N. Potter, boxed in two encyclopedia-size volumes (8 1/2 x 11 1/4") running to 628 pages in volume one, and 824 pages in volume two, I would call the price (\$25) modest for the treasure it offers.

For the first time we have all the canonical Sherlock Holmes stories presented in *chronological* order, according to the chronology worked out in great detail by Mr. Baring-Gould in a separate volume published in 1955 by the Baker Street Irregulars. (*The Chronological Holmes*). It is true that any Holmes buff who has read various chronologies, or has made his own private studies into the canon (or conan, as it is often referred to) may disagree with the placement of some of the stories here; but I do not think any but the most fanatical would find the Baring-Gould arrangement intolerable.

The text of the stories appears in 3 and 3/4" columns on the inside of the page; the annotations are in the outer 2 and 3/4" columns in slightly smaller type, with a little more air between the lines so that reading is no problem.

Illustrations are profuse: there are maps, diagrams, coats of arms, photographs, and drawings—repro-

ductions of many of the numerous illustrations that accompanied the original and later appearances of the tales and novels. I haven't the energy to count them.

In my run-down of the contents, I shall not list the titles of stories, but only those of section headings and the titles of special essays written for this edition. (The opening section alone contains a dozen preliminary essays.) I shall, however give the numbers of these items, as everything in the table of contents is numbered; and each of the stories has a brief blurb; both the blurb and the titles of the essays are quotations from the canon, with one exception in the first volume.

I "Two Doctors and a Detective: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John H. Watson, M. D., and Mr. Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street." #1. "*I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere Since You Became His Chronicler*"; # 2 "*He Is Now Translating My Small Works Into French*"; # 3 "*I . . . Have Even Contributed to the Literature of the Subject*"; # 4 "*You Would Have Made an Actor and a Rare One*"; # 5 "*Your Pictures Are Not Unlike You, Sir, If I May Say So*"; # 6 *A Singular Set of People, Watson . . .*"; # 7 "*Your Merits Should Be Publicly Recognized*"; # 8 "*The Best and the Wisest Man Whom I Have Ever Known*"; #9 "*Good Old Watson!*"; # 10 "*He Is the Napoleon of Crime, Watson*"; # 11 "*I Have My Eye on a Suite in Baker Street*"; # 12 *What Is It That We Love in Sherlock Holmes?*

II "The Early Holmes": the two cases (1874 and 1879) which took place before the historic meeting of the partners, and which Dr. Watson

wrote up from Holmes' notes and reminiscences.

III "The Partnership, to Dr. Watson's First Marriage" (early January 1881, to November 1886). # 16 is "*As to Your Dates. That Is the Biggest Mystification of All*"; # 18 is "*It Is . . . the Deadliest Snake in India*".

IV "From Dr. Watson's First Marriage to the Death of the First Mrs. Watson (*circa* November 1, 1886 to late December 1887, or early January 1888). # 22 is "*Now, Watson, the Fair Sex Is Your Department*".

V "From Dr. Watson's Return to Baker Street to His Marriage to Mary Morstan" (late December, 1887, or early January 1888, to *circa* May 1, 1889). # 34 is "*Your Hand Stole Towards Your Old Wound*". (The first volume concludes with *The Sign of the Four*, section V carrying over to volume two.)

VI "From Dr. Watson's Second Marriage to the Disappearance of Sherlock Holmes" (*circa* May 1, 1889, to Monday, May 4, 1891).

VII "From Holmes' Return to Dr. Watson's Third Marriage" (Thursday, April 5, 1894, to October 1902). # 48 is "*You May Have Read of the Remarkable Explorations of a Norwegian Named Sigerson . . .*".

VIII "The Partnership Comes to a Close" (January to October, 1903). # 75 is ". . . *It Is Undoubtedly Queer*".

IX "Sherlock Holmes in Retirement" (1909) # 77 is "*The Friends of Mr. Sherlock Holmes Will Be Glad to Learn That He Is Still Alive and Well*".

(Turn to page 123)

The House Of The Living Dead

by Harold Ward

"LIVING CORPSES! MEN AND WOMEN, filched from the grave, festering in their moldering cerements, talking, laughing, dancing, breathing, holding hellish jubilee! All this have I seen—and more. Yet who will believe me—I who am an inmate of the House of the Living Dead? Even as I pen this screed I look down and see the rotting cloth dropping from my mildewed framework with every move and feel the maggots bore their tortuous way through my decaying carcass. Ugh! Even I, living dead man that I am, inured to the horror of it all, shudder as I write.

"I am helpless. Would that I had the power to free myself from the foul grasp of Lessman, the master of us all! Across the room lies the body of Carter Cope. Soon, but not until Lessman commands, I will return to occupy it. My body belongs to him—to Doctor Lessman. But my soul is my own, even though Lessman holds it in his clutches. For the soul does not die. Ah, a wonderful man is Dartus Lessman—able as he is to throw off his temporal body and assume that of another. He is a superman—or a devil. I . . . "

Why had the sinister Dr. Lessman permitted his prisoner to write an account of the terrible things that went on in this sanitorium?

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Asa Rider, private investigator, laid the manuscript on the table before him, that morning in 1931, with a snort of disgust.

"What twaddle is this?" he demanded angrily. "My time is too valuable, Mr. Harper, to devote to such drivel. It is nothing but the manic gibberings of diseased brain. I . . ."

His visitor stopped him with a little gesture. "But is it?" he questioned gravely. "Do I look like the sort of man to be stampeded? As I told you at the commencement of our interview, I am an attorney of twenty-five years' standing. I know Carter Cope. Only a few months ago he was in my office. He came in response to my request. I, as attorney for Priestly Ogden, retained him to institute a search for that unfortunate young man. I can honestly say that Cope is no more insane than you are. He disappeared that night. His car was found, a battered pile of junk, in an abandoned stone quarry many miles north of here. His body has never been found.

"I never believed that he was dead. Then, yesterday, this weird manuscript reached me by mail. It was in a sealed envelope placed within another envelope, both addressed to me. With it was a brief note from a man who signs himself Fred Rolfe stating that he had picked it up alongside the road close to Oakwood cemetery. The handwriting, both in the body of the manuscript and on the envelope, is that of Carter Cope.

"Briefly, sir, I believe that Carter Cope is the victim of some terrible misfortune. Possibly, as you have suggested, it may be mental. But, at any rate, he still lives. I want you to seek him out and save him from this—this thing, whatever it is. I sent Carter Cope into it, just as I am seeking to send you. I feel a moral responsibility and John Harper is not the man to shirk his responsibilities. My private fortune—and I am not a poor man by any means—is at your command. Incidentally, in seeking him, you may run across a clue to the whereabouts of Priestly Ogden. I ask you this favor, Mr. Rider: Read the manuscript to the end. Diagnose it with an open mind. Having finished it, if you do not care to accept the commission, I will seek some other detective. Otherwise—"

"Why did you come to me?" Rider interrupted bluntly. "I am a stranger to you. My reputation is not so great that you would seek me out without some good reason."

John Harper shrugged. "Perhaps you are not unknown to me," he responded quickly. "And I know you to be a single man, your closest relative a distant cousin. I am sending you into danger. And, frankly, you will not be greatly missed should you meet the same fate that seems

to have overtaken Carter Cope and Priestly Ogden. I say with equal frankness that I doubt whether you will come out of the affair alive. I have a feeling—call it a hunch, if you choose—to that effect. The man who accepts my commission cannot be a coward."

"Your talk of danger intrigues me," Rider said hotly. "Leave the manuscript here. Let me read it through. I will give you my answer in the morning."

John Harper rose to his feet. "I will be at the Lincoln Tavern until noon tomorrow," he responded, extending his hand. "I will expect an acceptance by that time or the return of the manuscript. Meanwhile"—his hand moved toward his pocket—"what about a retaining fee? It is customary, I believe."

Rider shook his head. "Should I accept your commission, I will render my bill when I have finished my work. And I warn you in advance, Mr. Harper, that it will not be a small one."

"Bring me the solution of the puzzle and there will be no quibbling over your fee," Harper asserted. "I want to know the truth regardless of the cost."

He moved toward the door. Even before it closed behind him, Rider knew that he would accept the lawyer's tender. He filled and lighted his brier and gathered the sheaf of papers together. They were in pencil, somewhat in the form of a diary, although undated. With them was a clipping from some newspaper, it, like the manuscript, being without date.

They are given here verbatim:

The Strange Story of Carter Cope

I AM WRITING THIS IN THE House of the Living Dead. I know it by no other name. Perhaps, some time, some one will find this manuscript and explain my strange fate to the world. Now . . .

But I digress. Let me start at the beginning, hard though it is to tell the story.

There was something sinister and foreboding about the rambling old place that caused me to shudder in spite of myself. On either side was a clump of evergreens through which each breath of vagrant wind soughed and moaned like a lost soul in purgatory. A scant hundred yards away to the right was a tiny, vine-covered ruin of a church, its spire rotting and drooping, its windows broken. Surrounding it was

a tangle of underbrush and weeds through which I caught a glimpse of sunken graves and fallen tombstones.

The house was a huge pile of brick and stone and wood. It sprawled against the side of the little hill like some squat, ungainly monster in the midst of a fetid jungle. The weed-grown burying-ground extended through the evergreens almost to the flagstone path which wound, twisting and snake-like, through the mass of creepers and lilac bushes and stunted arbor-vitae trees with which the front yard was filled. There was something eerie and unreal about the place—something that gave me a feeling that if I investigated closer I would find a layer of fungus over everything.

Surrounding the unsightly ensemble was a high, iron fence, the pickets sharpened at the top.

I swung open the creaking gate and entered, only to leap back with an exclamation of fright as the head and shoulders of a man suddenly appeared out of a little clump of bushes. He was a huge lump of a fellow, loutish and uncouth, his beard black and tangled, the hair—which hung low over his retreating forehead—long and matted and filled with sand burs. For an instant he gazed at me, an idiotic grin on his dough-like face, while I stared blankly back. Then I recovered myself and plunged into speech.

"I am looking for Doctor Darius Lessman," I informed him civilly. "Does he live here?"

The man made neither sound nor comment. Not a gleam of comprehension flitted over his ox-like face. I repeated the question again. For what seemed ages he stood there gazing dumbly at me. Then, with a queer, gurgling, throaty sound, he turned and disappeared back into the tangle of underbrush.

I was tempted to turn and retreat to my car, which stood beside the road a dozen rods away. Again the boding of disaster swept over me. In spite of the fact that the day had been hot and sultry, I felt the chills chase themselves up and down my spinal column. I squared my shoulders and continued my way up the stone-paved path.

The door before which I found myself was of nail-studded oak, blackened with age and flanked on either side by narrow panes of dark-colored glass. There was no sign of bell or knocker. Doubling my fist, I pounded a lusty tattoo.

There was no answer. I rapped again, cursing under my breath. I had a feeling that there was somebody on the other side of the panels, although I heard nothing. I raised my knuckles to rap again, when the door opened a tiny crack and an eye peered out at me. I opened

my mouth to speak, when the eye was suddenly withdrawn. A chain rattled. Then a door was slowly opened and I found myself staring into the face of a young woman attired in the conventional garb of a nurse.

"Pardon the delay in answering your summons," she said in a rich, throaty contralto. "In a place like this we, naturally, are forced to be careful."

She waited for me to answer. She was tall—taller than the average—and dark with the clear, white skin of the Eurasian. Her hair was drawn back under her pert little cap; it was as black as the darkness of a moonless night, while the eyes which gazed inquiringly into mine were as deep and unfathomable as limpid pools.

"Doctor Lessman," I managed to articulate.

"What is your business with him?" she demanded pleasantly, although firmly. "Doctor Lessman is, as you are no doubt aware, a very busy man. I am his secretary."

I nodded and presented my credentials.

"Carter Cope," she said, gazing down at the card in the leather-covered case I held in front of her eyes. "You are a detective?"

"In search of a young man named Priestly Ogden," I hastened to explain. "I have been retained by his relatives—or rather, by his lawyer for them."

"And where does Doctor Lessman fit into the picture?" she inquired.

"I hardly know myself," I smiled back at her. "The fact is that in searching through the young man's effects I chanced upon a scrap of paper on which the doctor's name was written. Investigation showed that he is licensed to operate a sanitarium for the treatment of mental disorders. Resolved to run down every possible clue, I came here in the hope that some quirk in the young man's brain prompted him to place himself under the doctor's care in the belief that he was temporarily deranged."

She nodded her comprehension. "I can recall no patient by that name," she said thoughtfully. "However, it would be best for you to talk to the doctor. Step into the office, please, and I will call him."

The room in which I found myself was out of keeping with the gloomy exterior of the house. It was gorgeously furnished, its columns of lapis-lazuli, a great fireplace across the end of onyx and marble. The walls were panelled and covered with silken curtains; the rugs were Persian and almost priceless. Here and there hung rare paintings; scattered

about were exquisite marbles in keeping with the remainder of the great room.

I dropped into a large Louis XV chair and looked about me.

"Doctor Lessman is busy just now," the girl informed me as she glided into the room. "I have informed him of your presence, however, and he will be with you inside of a few minutes."

She left the room again, closing the door behind her. I heard the click of a bolt and knew that I had been locked inside. My dealings with hospitals for the insane had been negligible, however, and I solaced myself with the thought that this, perhaps, was the customary procedure in such places.

For a moment I busted myself in making a mental survey of the room and its treasures. Then the thought suddenly flashed through my mind that, even though the sun was shining brightly outside, the place was artificially lighted. I glanced toward the windows. What I discovered there gave me a start.

The rich tapestry curtains covered thick steel shutters, tightly padlocked.

"You wished to see me, sir?"

I woke from my reverie. The man who stood before me was a tall and thin almost to the point of emaciation. He was clad in a surgeon's white smock, his coal-black hair brushed straight back. His nose was thin and hooked slightly, his dark beard trimmed to a needle-point. It was his eyes, however, which attracted me most. They were black and beady, deeply sunken in their sockets and thatched by heavy brows, giving his countenance an appearance at once saturnine and satanic.

I leaped to my feet with an apology. "You are Doctor Lessman?"

He nodded. "My secretary tells me that you are seeking a young man — Ogden, I believe she said the name was?"

While he was speaking he motioned me back to my chair, at the same time seating himself on the opposite side of the table. From one of the drawers he drew forth a sack of smoking-tobacco and a book of papers and, taking a leaf therefrom, deftly rolled himself a cigarette.

"Smoke?" he inquired, pushing a humidor of cigars across to me.

I nodded and accepted one of the weeds. He waited until I had lighted it, then plunged into a mass of questions which almost left me breathless with the answering. The man was a brilliant talker, examining me so deftly that inside of five minutes he had milked me dry in spite of myself, learning almost as much of my past life as I knew myself.

"A bachelor, eh?" he said reflectively. "Quite the thing. I would

imagine, for one whose occupation is as dangerous as yours. Criminology has always been a hobby of mine; I regret that I have not had the time to study it more. Take the present instance—psychologically, I mean. I would like to know what reasoning led you to believe that your man, Ogden, was here."

We are all more or less susceptible to flattery. I am no different from the average man. I told him of my search for the missing young man and the finding of the slip of paper among his effects with Lessman's name written on it.

"It was my belief," I said, taking the bit of paper from my pocket and passing it across the table to the physician, "that the young man might be suffering from a belief that he was off mentally and that he had, therefore, placed himself under your care."

Lessman slowly shook his head as he examined the paper I had handed him.

"Not my writing," he said. Then: "In other words, Mr. Cope, your visit here is merely one of the thousand little details connected with your profession?"

I nodded.

"By running down each tiny clue we eventually hit upon something which leads us to the solution of the puzzle we are working on," I answered somewhat grandiloquently.

"Your man Watson?" he inquired with a twinkle in his deep-set eyes. "I presume you have one—some admirer who takes notes of your triumphs and mistakes in the hope of some day handing your exploits down to posterity?"

I shook my head. "I work entirely alone," I replied. "My trip here will, like thousands of my other mistakes, never be chronicled for the simple reason that no one will ever know of it. No one knows that I am here and I am not fool enough to tell of my blunder. It is only successes that I report."

I realized too late that my answer was what he had been seeking for. His face changed. The look of dignity was wiped out in an instant and in its place came a peculiar, evil stare.

I started to leap to my feet. Something held me in my chair as in a vise. What was it? I do not know. Nor do I understand it to this day. I struggled against it with all the power at my command, but in vain. I tried to talk. My tongue dove to the roof of my mouth. My head was as clear as a bell. I could think and reason, but I could not co-ordinate my muscles. I was paralyzed.

Lessman bent over me for an instant. Then he stepped across the floor and opened the door. "Meta!" he called sharply.

The girl entered. She gave a single look at me, then dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands. "Another?" she wailed. "Oh, God! No more—no more! This—this horrible—this awful thing has gone far enough!"

Lessman stretched his hand toward her. She rose, half crouching, and approached my side. Then she sprang back again, a look of revulsion spreading over her beautiful face. "Some other time. Some other time," she wailed. "I can not go through with it today."

A dog-whip was lying on one of the chairs. Lessman seized it and brought it down her beautiful shoulders. With the first blow her attitude changed. For an instant she cowered in the corner. Then, as he struck her again, he hissed a word of command. She tore her gown open in front and allowed its folds to drop around her, baring her beautiful body to the lash. Across the white flesh the cruel whip raised a dozen red welts. She took a step closer to her tormenter. Again and again he struck her with all the force at his command.

The expression on her face was not one of pain, but of sensual enjoyment. She uttered no sound as she stood there, her lips parted slightly in a smile that showed her gleaming teeth, a look of almost dog-like devotion in her wonderful eyes. With a snarl, the doctor finally hurled the whip upon the floor. She leaped forward and dropped to her knees at his feet, her arms raised in an attitude of supplication.

"You are my master!" she exclaimed proudly. "My body is yours to command. My soul belongs to God, but you are its keeper."

He smiled triumphantly. Slowly he turned on the balls of his feet and pointed to me. Her eyes brightened. For an instant she crouched like a panther about to spring. Then she turned to him again.

He smiled triumphantly. Slowly he turned on the balls of his feet and pointed to me. Her eyes brightened. For an instant she crouched like a panther about to spring. Then she turned to him again.

"Something tells me that somewhere another holds my heart like a burning pearl between his hands, Master," she wailed.

"This is he," Lessman asserted.

Her face changed. She moved toward me slowly, her rounded arms extended. I prayed. God, how I prayed! The world danced before my eyes. Something was happening. My very soul was being torn from its moorings. She pressed her lips to mine. I attempted to push her from me—to shriek for help. I was unable to move, to utter a sound.

Before me the burning eyes of Lessman seared into my brain. Something seemed to tell me that I was myself—that I was someone else—someone who had known and loved this girl in the dim past. . . . Then consciousness left me.

2

I RETURNED TO CONSCIOUSNESS with a start. I was lying on a cot in a bleak, unfurnished room. The sun was shining through the uncurtained window. The beetle-browed man I had seen in the garden at the time of my entrance was sitting on a broken chair close to the foot of the bed regarding me with an idiotic grin.

For an instant I lay there trying to collect my thoughts. Then recollection swept over me. The remembrance of that meeting in the doctor's office—everything—came to me with a rush. I swung my feet to the floor and rose unsteadily. The man with the beetle brow gave a peculiar, guttural cry and took to his heels, slamming the door behind him.

Unconsciously I swept my hand across my chin. My face was covered with a day's growth of stubble. Yet I had visited the barber just before driving to Lessman's. I glanced down at my wrist watch. It had stopped. The thought flashed across my mind that I had slept the clock around. I felt groggy and tired. My brain declined to function. For an instant the room swam before my eyes. Was I dreaming? No.

I wondered if I was a prisoner. Summoning all of my will-power I staggered to the door through which the shaggy-haired man had retreated. It was unlocked. I stepped out in the hallway.

Unlike the lavishly furnished room where I had met Doctor Lessman, the hall was unfurnished and bare. Cobwebs hung from the ceiling; the corners were festooned with them. The floor was covered with dust. The paper was mildewed and torn. On either side the doors were open. I noted that none of the apartments were furnished. All bore the same evidence of desertion that the hall showed.

I was on the second floor. That much was apparent. I dragged my weary body around the corner and came upon a stairway leading downward. I descended, finally emerging upon the lower level almost in front of Lessman's office. The door was open. I entered.

The saturnine physician was seated beside the table smoking, a book between his fingers. He turned slowly at my approach, his eyes gazing into vacancy. Then recognition swept over him and he gave me a slight nod.

"You are—yes, you are Cope," he said slowly. "Sit down. What do you want?"

"My freedom," I answered bitterly.

He raised his arched eyebrows questioningly.

"My dear man, you are free to go whenever you choose," he answered almost irritably. "You came here as a voluntary patient and asked for treatment. I . . ."

"Patient? Treatment?" I ejaculated. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I say," he responded. "Your bill is paid a month in advance. Naturally, I will not refund your money, although I do not care to hold you against your will."

Again the room swam before my eyes. Was I insane? Was the whole horrible affair only the hallucination of a disordered mind? Had I dreamed of the beating he had inflicted upon the girl, Meta? Was the episode following my entrance only a part of my delirium? I turned to him appealingly.

My face must have reflected the condition of my mind. He pointed to the door. I strode forward and, turning the knob, looked out. Something—some strange power—held me back. I tried to break it. Impossible. Like a whipped puppy, I turned back into the room once more. My mind was as clear as a crystal. I swear it. I realized that I was free to go—that it was my duty to leave the hellish place as soon as possible—that I should bring the proper officers back with me and search it from cellar to garret. Yet I could not move. I could no more cross that threshold than I could fly.

The sweat burst out on my brow in great beads. I turned to a chair and dropped into it wearily. Lessman gazed at me mockingly, a cynical smile hovering over his diabolic face. Opening a drawer, he brought forth a printed blank and passed it over to me.

"You must understand, Mr. Cope, that even though your commitment is voluntary, I must have something to show in case of inquiry," he said quietly. "Kindly sign your name on the dotted line at the bottom of the page."

I picked up the pen he offered me. Something seemed to grip my fingers. I struggled against signing, but in vain. In spite of myself I affixed my signature to the document.

Several days have passed since I wrote the above. I am like an animal now. My hair is matted and unkempt, my beard tangled and uncombed. I spend most of my waking hours in a sort of trance in my

bleak, unfurnished room which, it appears, I share with the beetle-browed man. He sleeps on the floor, curled up like a dog. Sometimes I wonder if he is Priestly Ogden. I have asked him several times, but he does not answer me. He seems to be without the power of understanding. He is an automaton. He brings the food to our room and we wolf it down like ravenous beasts without regard for the common decencies. I am almost as wild and unkempt as he is . . .

I have tried several times to leave this accursed place. I am allowed the run of the yard and there does not appear to be any guard over me. But whenever I approach the gate something seems to drag me back. I am bound here by invisible chains.

I see little of Lessman and less of Meta. I do not seem to be a prisoner, yet, as I said before, I have not the will-power to leave . . . The other day I found this tablet of paper in one of the rooms. Luckily my pencil was still in my pocket. Lessman, passing by, noticed me writing and gazed over my shoulder. He chuckled, half to himself, but said nothing. Since he made no objection, I will continue.

Of late I have been subject to dreams—weird, horrible nightmares. They frighten me. Let me explain. Yesterday there was a funeral in the little cemetery I have already described just at the edge of this uncanny place. I watched them from the window as they tenderly lowered the coffin into its final resting-place.

Final resting-place! God, what mockery! I wonder if it really was. I dreamed about it last night. Ugh! How realistic that dream was! I was in the burying-ground with the beetle-browed man. We were armed with spades. Lessman stood close by and directed operations while Meta held the lantern by which we worked. We opened the grave and removed the body from the casket—a young and good-looking man—then we refilled the grave and carried the cold form to the house. It all seemed horribly real.

This morning when I woke up I was tired and every muscle in my body ached as if from some unaccustomed exercise. I scarcely stirred from my bed all day. I am beginning to wonder . . .

No, I am not insane. Yet Lessman says that I came here and asked him to treat me. I must have been suffering from amnesia, for I have no recollection of anything save what I have written here. I know that I am as sane as I ever was except for the hallucinations and the inability to obey my own will. But if I continue to dream as I have been dreaming I shall be a raving maniac before long . . .

I had another dream last night. God, it was diabolical! I will try to describe it. Lessman seemed to be calling me. I leaped from my couch and hurried through the darkened corridors to a huge room at the rear of the house. The door was open and the place was brilliantly lighted. Lessman, clad in surgeon's smock, was waiting for me. Meta in her trim nurse's garb stood a little way back. She smiled as I entered and gave me a friendly nod.

The room was fitted up like the interior of a hospital. In the center was an operating-table. There were vials and retorts and shelves filled with bottles and boxes and several cases of bright instruments. To one side was a door. Lessman commanded me to open it. His will was mine. A draft of cold air greeted me as I stepped inside. It was like an ice-house, only the air was dead and moldy. Once I was inside a morgue. It was the same—there was a feeling of deadness even in the atmosphere.

He turned on an electric light. It *was* a morgue. On marble slabs lay several bodies in their grave clothes. Nearest the door was the young man I had dreamed of stealing from the grave the night before. At Lessman's command I picked the cold form up in my arms and carried it to the outer room and laid it on a leather-covered couch.

As I straightened up I caught a glimpse of Lessman's eyes. They gazed through me like twin X-Rays. I heard his voice calling to me as from a great distance, telling me to separate myself from my body. Then came a feeling of dissolution. Time after time I seemed to be falling through space—falling—falling—falling. I would catch myself with a jerk, standing in another part of the room, but my body was in front of Lessman. I was puzzled. Always, as I have said, just as my soul seemed to be leaving my body, something would snap and I would find myself gazing into Lessman's eyes.

"I can't do it tonight," I heard him mutter to Meta. "It is not the subject's fault, however, but my own. For some reason I am unable to concentrate. It will have to be you again."

My last recollection was of hearing Meta sobbing.

I awoke again with the same feeling of lassitude and inertia.

Great God above! It was not a dream. Everything is clear to me now. I have the satisfaction of knowing, however, that I am not insane. In prowling through the house today I chanced to find the door of the operating room, or laboratory, open. I entered. The place was unoccupied. The interior was just as it had appeared to me in my vision, dream, or whatever it was. Across the room was the door opening into

the little morgue. I knew that inside lay the bodies of the dead. I moved toward it and had my hand on the knob when I heard the voices of Lessman and Meta in the office. I darted out and was halfway up the stairs when they appeared.

What is this charnel-house? What is the ghastly plot in which I appear to be one of the central figures?

3

MY MIND IS IN A HAZE as I write these lines. Something has happened to me—something so weird, so unbelievable that I can scarce believe it myself. I am not myself! I am someone else! I am the dead man who was buried in the little cemetery adjoining this foul place and whose cold, cold clay Jake—Lessman and Meta call the beetle-browed man Jake—and I disinterred. And yet I am—I must be—Carter Cope. I think as Carter Cope. My actions are those of Carter Cope. . . God! It is awful! There is no one to whom I can talk. I must write or my already tottering mind will break entirely.

I say that I am Carter Cope and yet that I am someone else. The body of Carter Cope lies in the little morgue in the rear of Doctor Lessman's laboratory. I have seen it with my own eyes. Yet I am Carter Cope. I am here. But is this I? Where will I commence on this chapter?

Last night I heard the voice of Lessman calling me again. Yet there was no voice save in my own mind. It must have been the thought waves from his marvellous brain beating against my subconsciousness. I rose from my lowly cot and obeyed his command. He and Meta—curse their foul souls!—were in the laboratory. She was clad in some sort of thin, transparent material through which every curve of her beautiful, sensuous body showed. As I entered she gazed at me with a look of indescribable longing. Her blood-red lips were half parted over her pearly teeth; her wonderful eyes were filled with languorous passion. She took a step toward me, her soft, white hands extended beguilingly, her rounded breasts rising and falling with each breath. Lessman turned and waved her back to the couch on which she had been half reclining. Lessman owns me . . . He owns me body and soul. I am his to command. I know this now. I desired this woman, yet I made no movement toward her because he willed otherwise. At his command I turned away from this rare creature of flesh and blood to the door of the little morgue and staggered forth with the stiff, frozen body of the young

man whom I have already mentioned. I placed it on the operating-table, then looked at my master—at Lessman—inquiringly.

"My experiments with you have not been altogether successful," he told me in his calm, low voice. "Somewhere, deep in your mind, your will is battling against that which I am striving to do. In order to make my experiment a success you must be complaisant.

"I am, my friend, attempting to change the law laid down by the Creator of all things. I am attempting the transference of the soul. Think of it! For those who know my secret there will be no such thing as death—only a moving on from one shape to another. When man's body wears out he need only discard it and assume another and so continue on and on to the end of time.

"Science, my friend, has shown us that life—the soul—the essence of being—weighs only the infinitesimal part of an ounce. Yet without it we cease to be. The young man whose carnal shell lies before you weighs practically as much as he ever did. The same framework of bones supports his flesh. Yet he is nothing—a mere clod. Why? Because the thing we call life is missing. It is that spark which, with your help, I propose to give him for the time being.

"Time after time I have succeeded with the assistance of Meta, but never with another. Look at her, my friend. Is she not beautiful? She is yours if you but give me your aid. Allow your conscious mind to lie dormant for an instant until I catch your soul. Will you do it? The prize is well worth winning.

Fool! Fool that I was! Did I not know that his long harangue was merely to compose my soul so that it would be more pliable in his hands? Did I not know that Meta was but the bait to draw me into the trap? I caught a little glimpse of her. She smiled at me. Something within me snapped . . .

I was a vapor—a thin, transparent, fog-like vapor. My body—the body of Carter Cope—lay sprawled on the floor in the middle of the room while I—that is, my aura—floated, wraith-like, above it. Lessman bent forward, his eyes glittering like twin fires of hell, his arms outstretched toward me.

I could think. My brain was clear. I realized everything that was going on, yet I was powerless to resist my master's call. His voice was calling to me, ordering me to enter the body of the dead man on the operating-table. I made no struggle now. I was too far gone to fight his commands.

Blackness . . . Egyptian darkness . . . the darkness of the infernal

regions. And cold—the chill iciness of death . . . the arctic cold of dead, frozen flesh . . .

I felt a thrill of life pound through my veins. Then came a sensation of delightful warmth. I pulled myself erect.

As true as there is a God in Heaven, I was the dead man. Yet I was not dead. I was alive.

My own discarded body, the body of Carter Cope, lay like a cast-off garment before me. I almost smiled as I noted a tiny rent in the leg of the trousers where I had torn it on a bramble the day before. The clothes I now wore were new—the grave clothes of the boy who had just been buried.

Lessman turned to Meta. His voice trembled with excitement as he addressed her. "Success! Success at last!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "This, then, is the beginning of the end of my long years of labor."

He leaned forward and whispered something in her ear. She drew back with a little gesture of disgust. He jerked the whip from beneath his smock and struck her across the shoulders. With the first blow she dropped on her knees before him, her arms extended, her face upturned. In her eyes was a look of esthetic bliss.

The wraith-like garment dropped from her rounded shoulders, across which the cruel whip raised a criss-cross of welts. The red blood trickled from them in tiny streams over the smooth, white flesh.

"More! More!" she begged in a soft, low voice. "I am Laela, priestess of Isis. Was I wrong when I loved, even though I had taken the vow of celibacy? Tell me, oh High Priest, ere you scourge me again."

He hurled her from him as if she was unclean. She rose slowly to her feet and drew her garment over her bleeding shoulders. She took a step toward him, her arms outstretched.

"Scourge me, my master," she wailed. "But take me not away from my beloved."

He struck her again. She turned to me. Something—I know not what it was—passed over me. She was calling me. Yet she made no sound. I advanced toward her. She met me. For an instant we stood there facing each other. I looked into her wonderful eyes. Then our lips met in one long, long kiss.

A feeling of bliss swept over me. Words cannot describe it. I glanced over Meta's shoulder. Lessman's eyes were upon me. They bored through me. My temporal body seemed to disappear leaving my soul alone to meet that of Meta . . .

Again a feeling of nothingness swept over me. Then came a strange buoyancy . . .

I was Meta Vanetta !

Before me stood the dead man— not dead, but pulsating with life. His arms were about me. He clasped me to him, drawing me so close that my face was pressed against his shoulder.

I was two beings— myself and Meta.

How can I explain it? I was Meta Vanetta. But was Meta Carter Cope? Impossible! I was still Carter Cope. Yet the body of Carter Cope lay on the floor where I had left it when I entered the shell of the man who stood before me. Upon his hands was blood— blood from the reeking gashes made by the whip on the shoulders of Meta.

Lessman's eyes! Again that feeling of oblivion— or nothingness— swept over me. I was drifting . . . drifting through space . . . drifting . . .

I awoke. I was leaning against the wall swaying dizzily. Meta stood on the other side of the room. She was leaning forward, her eyes gazing hungrily at me, her white arms extended toward me beseechingly. "Beloved!" I heard her call. Then nothingness again. Great God! I can not understand it.

When I awoke I was lying on my bed of straw. Jake, the beetle-browed man, sat up when he heard me stir and gazed at me, frightened. Then he ran from the room. His eyes were wide with terror.

There is no mirror by which I can confirm my thoughts. *But I know that I am not Carter Cope! I am the dead man we took from the grave!* That is why Jake ran away from me.

My hands are covered with blood— Meta's blood!

4

TWO DAYS HAVE PASSED since I made my last entry in this account of my life here in this diabolical House of the Living Dead. The House of the Living Dead! What a title that would be for a story! But the author would be locked up for the remainder of his life in some asylum. No one would believe that it was anything but the wanderings of a diseased mind.

Lessman is treating me better now since his experiment with me proved a success. I have been taken away from the room which I shared jointly with Jake and I am now lodged in an apartment on the first floor. Here there are all of the conveniences of modern life save one—a razor. There is a bathtub. I can keep myself clean. Lessman insists, however, that I

allow my beard to grow and that my hair remain uncut. He probably figures that a tangled mass of whiskers and long, dark hair will prove an effectual disguise should anyone who knows me see me from the road. And he is right. There is a mirror in the room I now occupy. I looked into it yesterday and almost failed to recognize myself in the tall, gaunt, bewhiskered man who gazed out at me.

I see a great deal of Meta now. Lessman is a devil incarnate. I believe that he has sold himself to the ruler of Hell. He knows that I love Meta and that I can not oppose his will as long as he allows us to mingle together. And I—I, poor fool—I know that Meta is his tool. She knows it, too. She loves me, but yet she obeys his every command. Daily, hourly, I feel my will-power growing weaker and weaker. The brain of Doctor Darius Lessman is my brain. I can not think for myself when he wills otherwise. That is why this screed is so rambling and incoherent. It is only when he wills it that I have the inclination to bestir myself. Time passes and I do not know it. I do not even know what day of the month this is. I do not care.

I wonder why Lessman allows me to continue my writing? Someone is liable to find this scrawl. He does not seem to worry about it, however. Meta believes that he knows that this outpouring of my soul is the link which binds me to sanity—the safety valve which keeps me from growing totally demented. Perhaps she is right. Lessman is a wonderful man. I am growing to like him more and more, devil though he is.

I have had several long talks with Meta. She is one woman in a million. She is more—much more—subservient to Lessman's will than I am. For some reason when we are together he withdraws his power over us and allows us to think for ourselves . . . But does he? Her mind is a blank on many things which have happened. She has no recollection of her constant assertions when under the influence of Lessman's whip that she is the reincarnation of someone—some long-dead priestess of some strange Egyptian cult. Yet she says that she always comes out of such spells feeling buoyant and light-hearted. She says that she suffers no pain when the cruel lash cuts into her flesh, but, on the contrary, each blow fills her with a strange, uncontrollable love for her tormentor. Not a sexual passion, but, rather, the love of a neophyte for the Creator of all things. As a matter of experiment, she has asked me to beat her; on several occasions I have tried to inflict bodily pain upon her, but the effect is different from when Lessman strikes her. Even a faint blow from my hand hurts her and causes her to shrink away from me.

She has no recollection of any other life than that with Lessman. She has been with him so long that she is almost a part of him. She does not know how old she is, nor has she any memory of a childhood. She reads and writes with ease and is an accomplished musician. Yet she says that she never attended school and does not know where she gained her accomplishments.

She believes that Lessman is two beings—that he has divided his soul and that half of it occupies her body. She believes that she is very old. Sometimes, she says, she has hazy recollections of a distant country — of another life in the midst of lotus flowers and robed priests and priestesses. She has never been in Egypt, yet she is certain that it is of Egypt that she dreams. She believes that she is occupying the temporal body of someone else, but that her soul is as old as time itself.

Who is Darius Lessman? Meta does not know. Within his skull is concentrated the wisdom of the ages. His most cherished possessions, she says, are two mummy-cases; in one of them is the mummified body of a priestess of Isis and in other that of a priest of that strange Egyptian cult of a bygone day. He keeps them under lock and key in a vault. Meta believes that he is the reincarnation of that priest and that she is the priestess. Who knows?

Meta and I have twice attempted to escape from this weird and unholy place. On both occasions we have gotten as far as the gate, yet we could not pass through it; Lessman's spell is too strong for us to break.

Lessman rarely shows himself by day. He is a denizen of the darkness. I picture him in mind's eye as consorting with the bats and owls and other inhabitants of the night. It is only at night that we see him, save on rare occasions. Meta says that he can work his hellish incantations better after sundown . . .

This afternoon we searched the house for him. He was neither within nor on the grounds. We even peered into the little morgue. The palatial office was unoccupied. The door to the little vault was open and I looked within. The two sarcophagi leaned against the wall. I turned away and, an instant later, Lessman stepped through the door. Yet I am willing to swear that, save for the two mummy-cases, the vault was bare. I was too much astounded for words. Nor did he make any explanation.

Later I discussed the matter with Meta. She believes that Lessman has the power to project himself into the body of the mummy and that he takes such rest as he may need in that manner. If so, where does he leave his mortal body? Yet she cannot be wrong. We have searched

the house and have found no bedchamber for him. Meta says that she has no recollection of ever seeing him asleep. Where does he disappear to during the day unless it is within the mummy-case? . . .

More horror! A dance of the dead! Lessman is succeeding far beyond his wildest dreams. He says that I was the turning-point in his experiments.

Last night he ordered Jake and me to bring from the morgue the three bodies that it contained. There was the young man whose shape I had assumed before and a young and beautiful girl. There was also a young, fair-haired man with throat cut from ear to ear. Into these shells he transferred the souls of Meta, Jake and myself. Then to the music of a radio—to the music of a dance orchestra playing in the dining room of one of New York's finest hotels—we, the dead, held hellish jubilee. For hours we danced and cavorted while our own bodies lay sprawled, like discarded garments, on the floor before us. God! It is horrible to think of it now in the clear, bright light of noonday. Last night it was different.

Meta assumed the body of the girl. I that of the young man we had stolen from the cemetery, while Jake took on the temporal form of the man with the slashed throat.

It is of Jake and the other that I would write. That Jake is Priestly Ogden is now a certainty. He told me so himself while the orchestra rested between dances in that far-away station in New York. Yet his story is so strange, so unbelievable, that I scarce know how to tell it.

Lessman killed him. The slash across his throat was made by a razor which tore through windpipe and jugular. Think of it! A man with his throat cut from ear to ear dancing, cavorting, gamboling to the strains of a modern orchestra playing *Betty Coed*. An orchestra whose music was brought to us through the air on the invisible waves of sound.

Lessman enticed him to this place. The girl was here—the girl whose form Meta had assumed. In driving past the house Ogden noticed her in the yard and, stopping, engaged her in conversation. He had fallen in love at sight. Lessman, appearing from nowhere, had invited him to return. That is how he came by the slip of paper bearing Lessman's name. He had returned the next day. Later when he was under Lessman's spell he had found that he was in love with a dead woman—a girl who had been filched from the grave six months before and whose shell sheltered the soul of Meta.

Within the morgue lay the body of Jake. Night after night Lessman

worked with Ogden in an effort to force his soul into the cold clay but without success. In a fit of anger he had killed his victim. Then, as Ogden's soul was leaving its shell, Lessman had captured it and confined it inside the body of Jake, the halfwit. All this he told me, and more, as we stood there waiting for the orchestra to strike up another tune. Yes, it is horrible—too horrible to mention—now that I am temporarily out from under the spell of the master mind. But last night it was different.

Lessman was pleased with the success of last night's experiment. He has a treat in store for us tonight, he says. He told us that last night after we had shed the bodies of the dead and had assumed our own shapes—told us after we had carried the cold, stark bodies back into the gloomy morgue.

A crew of workmen erected a tombstone over the grave of the young man whose body we stole from the cemetery. His name is John Reid. He is twenty-six years of age. It is graven on the marble slab.

If they only knew the truth! . . .

5

I MUST WRITE. IF I DO NOT I shall go mad. Already I feel my reason tottering. Last night I helped Lessman steal a soul. In the eyes of God and man I am as much a criminal as he is. Yet am I? What I did was at his dictation. I have no will of my own. It would make a pretty case for the courts—something for the learned judges and lawyers to spout and rave about until doomsday.

How can I describe what we did? I know so little of psychology, of philosophy, of theology. It is hard for me to write intelligently. Suffice to say that it is Lessman's theory—this much do I understand—that the doctrine of reincarnation is correct. Souls, he says, never die, but go on and on, changing the old bodies for new as speedily as the ancient shell is worn out. He believes that there are just as many people in the world now as there were in the beginning—no more and no less. He says that there is no such thing as nothingness. Matter dies, decays and returns to the earth from which it came. The globe on which we live weighs just as much as it did when it was created. A single ounce more would throw it out of balance; a single ounce less would do the same thing. Just as water evaporates, congeals and returns to the earth in the form

of hail and snow and rain, so, he believes, do souls leave one shell and return to occupy another while the body returns to dust.

He would change the process laid down by the Creator. It is his idea that the soul can go on and on in a different way—by changing its abiding-place before that strange thing called death occurs. He can extract the soul and mold it to his own needs, but in his opinion it must always have a dwelling-place. Until such a dwelling-place is found the soul is doomed to wander through space, a wraith, or, as we term it, a ghost.

Last night we took a holiday—the holiday of the dead. From some unknown source Lessman obtained an automobile. Into it he loaded all of us. But was it we who occupied the seats? I do not know. My own soul occupied the shell of John Reid. Jake was in his own form, but I know, now, that he is Priestly Ogden. Meta's ego was transferred into the body of Ogden's sweetheart. The dead girl's name was Nona Metzgar, she has told us. Why did he not allow us to use our own earthly shapes? I mustered up courage enough to ask him. He said that it was to insure our safety in case we were seen. In other words, Jake and Nona and young Reid were all known to be dead. Who, then, would believe the story of anyone who claimed to have seen this array of occupants of the grave in the act of performing their ghoulish work?

He laid before us new clothing in which we arrayed our bodies. He himself assumed the shell of Priestly Ogden and took the wheel. The horrible gash in his throat showed just above the collar of his shirt. Ugh! I shudder even now as I think about it. Imagine a man with throat cut from ear to ear driving a car filled with living dead men and women!

At the edge of a town a dozen or more miles away was a burying-ground. Here we stopped. Lessman, who had evidently posted himself in advance, led the way through the darkness straight to the newly-made grave. Jake and I followed with the shovels while Meta brought up in the rear with a lantern. The rain was falling in a steady drizzle; had we not been numbered among the dead ourselves the work of disinterring the coffin would have been a dismal one.

We had gotten little more than started when a sound in the bushes brought us to a sudden halt. An instant later half a dozen men dashed out of the undergrowth. At Lessman's command we took to our heels. They shouted an order at us. Then, when we did not stop, they fired a volley. The range was close and they could not miss. A dozen bullets



went through our dead flesh. But of what avail is it to shoot leaden bullets into the carcass of a man who is already dead? We laughed at the thought of it. The hellishness of our mirth caused them to stop. One of them was nearly atop of us. At the sound of our laughter he turned the beam of his flashlight upon us. It struck Lessman fairly in the face. They got one look at the grisly gash in his throat. They dropped their arms and took to their heels while we returned to our car and made our escape.

We drove through the rain another dozen miles or more, finally coming to another large cemetery. This time, however, Lessman did not stop at the edge of the grounds, but drove straight through the gate and up one of the graveled roads which curved through the trees and neatly trimmed foliage. Five minutes later we were in front of a large mausoleum. For an instant he probed at the lock; then the barred doors opened and we entered.

There were a dozen coffins in the niches. He turned to the nearest of them and commanded Jake to pry it open with his spade. The half-wit

obeyed. An instant later we were gazing down at the still, cold face of a man of middle age.

Dawn was not far away, so we were forced to work fast. It took Lessman but an instant to project his soul—or ego, if you wish—from the form of the murdered Priestly Ogden to that of the man in the coffin. An instant later the latter climbed from his narrow cot, the life-blood flowing through his veins.

At Lessman's command we picked up the body of Priestly Ogden and placed it in the coffin. Then we stole forth into the clean outside air again.

Once more we were fated to be interrupted. We were about to enter the car when the watchman came hurrying around the corner of the huge vault. He caught a glimpse of the car and, at the same time, the open doors of the mausoleum, and shouted a command to us to halt.

We paid no attention to his order. He turned the beam of his lantern on us just as the man in the other cemetery had done.

As the light struck Lessman squarely in the face the startled watchman uttered a cry of horror. What must have been his astonishment at seeing a man whom he had assisted in placing in the tomb only a few days before sitting at the wheel of a car in front of his last resting-place! Lessman laughed—a hellish, diabolical chuckle. The man turned and fled. We heard him scrambling through the bushes and undergrowth, howling in terror. Lessman switched on the ignition and, an hour later, we were back inside our own bodies again.

In the beginning of this chapter I stated that I had helped Lessman steal a soul. Let me explain.

Dawn was just breaking when we arrived at the place we called home—the House of the Living Dead. Lessman sent Jake somewhere with the car and, a moment later, assumed his own shape.

It was shortly before eight o'clock when a man appeared at the door—a tall, heavy-set individual, well dressed and prosperous-looking. Lessman had evidently been expecting the visitor; he hastily told me what to do, and now I, in the role of butler, answered the knock and ushered the man into the office.

I did not see what passed between the doctor and his visitor. I only know that, fifteen minutes after he had entered the house, Lessman summoned me again to assist him, this time in carrying the stranger into the laboratory. The poor devil was not dead. His brain was apparently normal, but every faculty was paralyzed just as mine had been that first time I met Lessman. There was a look of appeal in his eyes as I

entered the room. Evidently he thought that he might expect some help from me. But so strong is the power of Darius Lessman over me that I paid no heed to him.

Once in the laboratory Lessman worked fast. For an instant only he confronted the other. Slowly the spirit left the body and, hovering for an instant in midair, entered the shell of the middle-aged man we had stolen from the mausoleum.

Lessman turned to me, a look of triumph on his saturnine countenance.

"You can see, now, why I wanted the body," he said with the air of professor demonstrating to his class. "The soul, my friend, must have have a resting-place or else be doomed to wander forever over the face of the earth. Now, I want to borrow the body of this man for a day or two. Why? Because I must make a trip to the city. I need money with which to carry on my work here—money and other things. This man is wealthy. Perhaps, while I am occupying his shell, I will do things without the law. He has influence. Later, when I am through with it, I will transfer his soul back to its rightful resting-place, and allow him to answer for the things that I have done—for the liberties I have taken. But, first, I will make his mind blank insofar as the happenings here are concerned. Now do you understand?"

I shook my head dumbly, still not understanding.

As one sheds an old coat, so did Lessman shed his own form and enter the shell of the stranger. He stood erect and drew a great breath into his lungs.

"Eureka! The world is mine!" he exclaimed.

Lessman has just spoken to me as I wrote the above.

"Write '*Finitis*' to your screed," he commanded. "Do you think that I have thus allowed you to put your thoughts on paper without having a definite purpose in mind? I am in a hurry. So hasten your work."

This, then, is my last line. I hastily subscribe myself,

Carter Cope.



Rider's face wore a strange, far-away look as he laid the weird manuscript on the desk. Again he slowly filled and lighted his pipe, so absorbed in his thoughts that the match flame singed his fingers before he noticed what he was doing. He dropped the burning taper with an oath and picked up the newspaper clipping which had accompanied Carter Cope's communication.

MYSTERIOUS HAPPENINGS IN OAKWOOD CEMETERY!

Body of Prominent Man Stolen From Tomb—
Body of Suicide is Substituted—
Caretaker Tells of Seeing Dead Man in Car.

The body of Amos Hoskins, prominent philanthropist, was stolen from the mausoleum at Oakwood cemetery Monday night and in its place was substituted the body of a young man named Priestly Ogden, who has been missing from home for the past several months and who now, judging from the condition of the body, has been found to have committed suicide.

Jabez Heckwood, the cemetery caretaker, who lives in a small house just inside the grounds, was aroused from his slumber about 3 o'clock in the morning by the sound of a car driven into the grounds. Hastily dressing, he armed himself with a revolver and flashlight and hurried to the mausoleum in front of which, he noted, the car had stopped.

He was just in time to see four persons—three men and one woman—hurrying from the mausoleum to the car. He shouted at them to halt, at the same time pointing his flashlight in their direction.

The leader of the party of four, according to Caretaker Heckwood, was Amos Hoskins.

In view of the fact that Mr. Heckwood had, only two days earlier, assisted in placing the body of Mr. Hoskins—who died Thursday at his home, 1739 South Masfield St.—in the tomb, it is needless to state that he was badly frightened. Dropping flashlight and gun, he hurried to his home, where he telephoned to cemetery officials and members of the Hoskins family.

Upon arrival at the cemetery, the party found that the lock of the mausoleum had been picked and the body of Mr. Hoskins removed. In the casket lay the body of a young man whose throat was cut from ear to ear. From official descriptions, the police identified him as Priestly Ogden, 4519 Lenroot Ave., who disappeared from home several months ago. Identification was later completed by distant relatives.

Ogden was, without doubt, a suicide.

The police are investigating. The family of Mr. Hoskins has offered a reward of \$ 5,000 for information leading to the recovery of the body and conviction of the ghoul.

For an instant Rider sat in silence. Then he reached for the telephone, lifted the receiver and gave a number.

"Lincoln Tavern?" he inquired. Then: "I would like to speak to Mr. John Harper."

An instant later the connection was made. As the voice of Harper came booming over the wire, Rider spoke again.

"Rider speaking," he said tersely. "I am accepting your commission. I visit Lessman tomorrow morning."

He replaced the receiver on the hook, his face again wearing the strange, faraway expression.

Dawn was still two hours away when Rider, his car parked a quarter of a mile away, broke through the tangle of underbrush which surrounded the House of the Living Dead and, dodging furtively from shadow to shadow, finally reached his objective.

There was a light in one of the rooms in the rear of the house. He crept closer to the windows and attempted to listen. Only silence greeted his ears. The shades were tightly drawn, leaving not a crack through which he could peer.

Why had he told John Harper a falsehood? Why had he told the attorney that he would visit Lessman in the morning, only to hasten his trip by several hours? He scarcely knew, himself. Asa Rider was a man who believed in hunches. Something—some vague, indescribable sixth sense—had warned him of danger. He had made hasty inquiries.

John Harper had disappeared from his home twenty-four hours before. He had left no word where he was going, nor had cautious inquiries at the lawyer's office elicited any information.

Were John Harper and Doctor Darius Lessman one and the same? Was John Harper the man who appeared at Lessman's house of horror in the early hours of the morning? Was it his soul which now reposed in the dead of Amos Hoskins while Lessman masqueraded in his stolen body? Had Lessman given him the weird, unbelievable manuscript written by Carter Cope in an effort to trap him? Rider believed that he had. But why? The pseudo-lawyer had answered the question himself when he had told Rider that he had selected him for the dangerous task of seeking Carter Cope because there was none to mourn him should he, like Cope, disappear from the haunts of men.

In the rear of the house was a tiny leanto. Above it a window. Cope had stated that the upper floor was untenanted save for the man, Jake, and he was, in all probability, with the others in the lighted room.

Removing his shoes, Rider climbed the latticework to the roof of the little out-building. The window was unlocked. He raised it slightly and

allowed the beam of his flashlight to play over the bare, untenanted room. An instant later he was inside.

He could hear the subdued sound of conversation now. He reached for his revolver. Then he recalled the statement made by Carter Cope. Lead bullets had no effect on men and women who were already dead. With a shrug of his shoulders, he replaced the weapon in his pocket and, cautiously opening the door, entered the long, unlighted hall.

The door of the room in the rear of the house was open. He dodged down the stairs, halting for an instant in front of the office Carter Cope had described. The door was ajar, the room in darkness. He dodged inside and turned the beam of his flashlight here and there over the palatial interior. A second door to the left attracted his attention. It, too, was unlocked. He pulled it open and allowed the ray from his lamp to dissipate the darkness.

The little room was vacant save for two Egyptian mummy-cases leaning against the wall.

He heard the sound of a footstep behind him. He turned but too late. A dozen electric lights flashed into life as some one pressed the switch.

John Harper stood before him.

For an instant the attorney said nothing. Then he took a step forward, a smile of recognition upon his face.

"Ah, I see that you outguessed me," he chuckled. "You are right, Mr. Rider, I am Lessman—Lessman in the shell of John Harper. Luckily something—some sixth sense—called me into this room; else you might have escaped."

He motioned to a chair, seating himself on the opposite side of the table. For an instant Rider hesitated. Then, he, too, seated himself.

Lessman rolled a cigarette. "As you decided, Rider—you see I am able to read your mind to a certain extent—I needed another man to experiment with. I wanted a clean-cut, healthy specimen—a man whose habits were such that he appeared and disappeared frequently and whose relatives would make no great fuss if he never returned."

He chuckled. "John Harper wrote several checks today. In fact, practically all of his available cash is now in my hands. I have money enough now to complete my experiments. Tomorrow Harper will return to his usual haunts. The past forty-eight hours will be a blank to him. He will put it down to temporary amnesia, pocket his loss and say nothing. Meanwhile . . ."

He leaned forward. A feeling of inertia swept over the detective. He struggled against it in vain. He was paralyzed. His muscles refused to

co-ordinate. The eyes of the man on the opposite side of the table were boring holes through him, it seemed. His brain was clear, missing not a single detail. He summoned all of his will-power in an effort to resist the other . . .

In spite of the fact that he knew bullets would have no effect on the man who sat before him, Rider had, as the strange feeling of nothingness swept over him, involuntarily reached for the revolver which reposed in its leather holster beneath his left arm. Now, as his hand dropped, nerveless, his fingers accidentally touched the tiny crucifix which hung, suspended from a thin golden chain, about his neck.

For an instant the hypnotic influence of the master mind ceased. Rider felt the lifeblood surge through his veins once more. He leaped to his feet, his gnawing fingers tearing at the bottoms of his shirt as he jerked the little cross from its resting-place above his heart and held it aloft.

Lessman screamed. He leaped to his feet. The match which he had just lighted and was about to apply to the end of his cigarette dropped from his nerveless fingers.

"The Cross! The Cross!" he screamed hoarsely, staggering backward.



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And Rider remembered that the cross is older than Egypt as a symbol against evil.

There was a flash. The lighted match, falling into the wastepaper basket, had ignited it. Now, while the two men stood facing each other, the flames crept to the window hangings. An instant later the room was an inferno.

Rider, fighting his way through the smoke and fire, the tiny cross still held aloft, fell in a little heap in the middle of the yard. For five minutes he lay there sucking the fresh night air into his tortured lungs.

From inside the house he heard screams. Then silence.

The door opened; Lessman, staggering under the weight of two mummy-cases, dashed through the flame-encircled doorway.

He hurled the cases from him. Then he fell. He dragged himself to his feet and, turning, re-entering the burning building.

Through the smoke which poured out of the roaring inferno drifted two white, mist-like forms. For a moment they were wafted here and there by the suction of the flames. Then, fog-like, they settled over the two mummy-cases. Lower and lower they hovered until they covered the cases like dew. Then, even as Rider, his teeth chattering as if from the ague, watched, the vapor disappeared within the cases.

"Lessman and Meta," he muttered in an awed whisper. "Carter Cope was right. Within the mummified forms of that long-dead priest and priestess the souls of those two fiends make their home."

Rider darted forward to drag the cases farther away from the burning building, but he was too late, for the roof crumbled, and the blazing wall fell out onto the mummy-cases, enveloping them in a sheet of flame.

With the coming of morning nearby residents, hurrying from the four quarters of the landscape, raked through the smoldering ruins. The remains of six bodies were found, burned beyond recognition.

Of the House of the Living Dead not even the two mummy-cases remained.



The Indoor Safari

by Max Nugor

IT TAKES COURAGE TO ACCEPT an invitation from a man who not only holds you in utter contempt, but has the power and resources to take his revenge.

Paul Trence had agreed to call on Sebastian that evening. He suspected the motive behind the invitation, yet a glimmer of hope compelled him to take the chance. He had brought the divorce papers with him to Sebastian's house; nevertheless he knew that the prospects of a settlement were indeed slim.

Paul had reminded Constance that day that he cared for her more than life itself. Tonight, he felt that his words would be put to the test.

"You may walk out safely—that is, if you avoid touching a certain needle on the way . . ."

It had been over a year since Paul had last seen Sebastian. As so often in the past, he trembled in his presence. He sat in the armchair facing his host with mounting apprehension.

From behind the study desk, Sebastian's huge body appeared to dominate the room. The black piercing eyes peered down at him with obvious scorn. The expensive suit failed to conceal the tremendous arms, symbolic of his powerful aura. Sebastian lifted his eyebrows quizzically, then casually tossed the lawyer's papers onto the desk. He then eased his bulk onto the chair, turning to Paul.

"You've lost weight Paul, and more of that fair hair Constance used to admire so much. I'm most surprised! I should have thought that in the two years you've been living with my wife, your health might have improved."

Paul tightened his lips; until Sebastian revealed his true intentions, it would be wiser not to reply. Sebastian sighed.

"Poor Constance! she was always trying to nurse sick things. When she finally left me for you, a puny librarian, I was hurt, but not unduly surprised at her choice. I admit that she was always afraid of me, I couldn't see any reason for this fear; neither could I understand her particular hatred for this house. True it's old; but it has character—especially this room."

Paul watched quietly as Sebastian left his chair, then walked slowly around the study, gazing with reminiscent eyes at the animal trophies on the wall. Sebastian frowned deeply. "She never understood my passion for hunting, never once showed interest in this wonderful collection of sporting guns. Constance simply abhorred these mounted trophies. Now take this lion: What a magnificent specimen! He would probably have died of starvation or disease; I have given him immortality."

Paul interrupted. He felt unable to remain silent any longer. "Now look here Sebastian! You asked me over this evening to discuss a divorce. Are you just amusing yourself, or do you intend to release her?"

The dark features hardened instantly; the quiet compelling voice continued. "My dear Paul, listen to my words very carefully. I assure you that your very life hinges on them."

"Are . . . are you threatening me?"

Sebastian smiled. "Threatening is the wrong word. I propose to kill you."

Paul stiffened in his chair. "So you just used the settlement talk to lure me to your place this evening."

"You have the idea. I want you to relax for a while. I could have

shot you earlier, or for that matter anytime. As you are fully aware, I'm considered a sportsman; but I must confess that my appetite for easy killing has become rather jaded."

Paul was transfixed, almost hypnotized by Sebastian's quiet yet dominating presence.

Sebastian continued. "I loved Constance more than you'll ever be capable of dreaming. After she had gone, I was driven to distraction, so I finally returned to East Africa for a hunting safari. There I hoped to recapture some of my old zest for the sport. Unfortunately, it was all too easy, I derived little satisfaction. I'm an expert at everything, except in getting affection from my wife."

Paul began to fidget uneasily. What did Sebastian intend to do? What was the meaning of this one-sided conversation? He then watched with horror as Sebastian removed a large rifle from the rack, and started to caress the stock with his huge fingers.

Sebastian sensed the alarm in Paul's eyes. "Don't worry just yet my friend. I'm not going to shoot you. Constance probably told you that I never lie." His eyes grew wistful. "Of my many qualities that was one she feared the most."

Paul continued to watch him intently. What was this maniac proposing to do? Would he ever leave this house alive? He rose to his feet uncertainly.

"Sit down!" Sebastian snapped. "Don't ever tempt me to break my word."

Paul slumped back onto the armchair. With growing dejection he pondered over his possible fate. If Sebastian didn't intend to shoot him, what other method had he devised?

Sebastian eyed Paul carefully. "I decided to kill you a few months ago. I had returned from Safari, and was staying at the Grange Hotel in Nairobi. It was a hot evening; I couldn't sleep. My thoughts as usual turned to Constance, and then to you. I had been plagued by mosquitos — irritating, yet remarkably efficient creatures. How they insert such a minute tube into the skin and withdraw the blood is remarkable."

He replaced the rifle back into its position on the rack. Then critically inspected a revolver. He went on talking.

"I found that duplicating a slightly larger device, this time to insert poison by mechanical means, was extremely difficult. Nevertheless using the resources at my disposal, I devised a miniature needle. Now when it is placed in an appropriate setting, it's almost invisible to the naked

eye. The poison I intend to use with the device kills within a minute; I therefore have a rather intriguing weapon."

Paul gripped the chair arms tightly. "You intend to use this device on me?"

Sebastian grinned sardonically. "Precisely my dear Paul; but as I mentioned, I'm a sportsman. I propose to give you a chance to live. If you should succeed in avoiding the trap that I have set for you, I'll grant Constance a divorce—and incidentally release her considerable trust-fund."

Paul replied, with a courage that he did not feel, "You realize that if you kill me, the dumbest cop would guess the motive. I should warn you that Constance knows that I'm here."

"True, true," he nodded his head in agreement. "I gave our meeting a great deal of thought. As a sportsman, I'm gambling that the method of execution will ensure my acquittal. I could be wrong, of course, but that adds to the element of excitement."

"You're insane," Paul hissed.

Sebastian just grinned. "You could be right—but that doesn't alter the situation in any way, does it?"

Paul bowed his head in agreement. "How do you intend to carry out this scheme of yours."

"Splendid!" Sebastian cried. "At last you're showing interest. This is most important; your very thoughts and actions will determine whether you live or not. I assure you that you alone will decide your destiny."

He grinned encouragingly.

"Just think Paul, the rewards are high: Your life and my wife together with a sizable trust fund. Failure will bring you quick death, but believe me when I tell you that you have a really sporting chance to survive."

Paul quickly rose to his feet. "I've had enough of this insance conversation. I'm leaving this house right now!"

To his surprise, Sebastian nodded in approval. "Excellent!" He beamed. "All you have to is this: leave the study through that door; walk down the stairs; then cross the hallway; open the main door, and finally leave the porch. Having done this you are absolutely free." He added reflectively. "Your only problem will be to avoid touching the needle implanted somewhere along the route. . . . You might call it an obstacle course."

Sebastian was still chuckling to himself as Paul cautiously picked up his briefcase, then walked slowly to the study exit.

The whole scheme was typical of Sebastian's macabre sense of humor.

Paul was certain that the murderous device existed. He studied the brass doorknob with a growing fear. The atmosphere in the room was stifling; he felt the tension rising as he reluctantly raised his fingers to turn the handle.

He suddenly stopped, then peered carefully at the knob. In the dim light he could not be sure that a needle had not been cunningly inserted. Well, he thought, there was another way to open the door. From his briefcase he withdrew a paper bound catalog. It was limp enough to use; opening the book at the middle pages, he cautiously wrapped it around the knob. Squeezing it gently, he began slowly to rotate.

Still gripping the book, he pulled the door gently towards him. He allowed the catalog to fall to the carpet; he would not touch it again.

With an audible sigh of relief, he left the room taking care not to touch the sides of the door. A hasty glance backwards revealed that Sebastian had departed by another exit; Paul had to curb a strong instinct to close the door behind him.

He tried to remain calm, but he found that his knees had a tendency to shake. He forced himself to stare down at the stairway; there were at least twenty steps winding to the hall. Perspiring freely, he wiped his forehead as he cautiously began to descend the stairway. He avoided touching the bannister rail; the needle could have been placed along its surface. On his left side was the wall-rail; this, too, was treated with suspicion.

Finally he reached the bottom of the stairs. He felt dizzy, but resisted an impulse to rest against the stairway pillar. He shook his head; he had to concentrate on what he was doing. Had he passed the needle? Or did it now lie menacingly in the hall?

He wiped his sweating palms on his topcoat as he surveyed the spacious entrance lobby. A luxurious carpet stretched about fifteen feet in front of him, this lead directly to the heavily constructed main door.

He advanced a few cautious steps. There on the carpet he saw a lady's watch. Possibly it had once belonged to Constance. Paul frowned deeply; this could be the trap. The watch as an obvious object in which to place the needle. He walked around it, at the same time looking at the watch as if it were alive. He approached to within three feet of the door, then stood perfectly still.

He began to study the teak structure. The door was reinforced with black metal strips; these matched the wrought iron ring, and antique handle, which appeared more decorative than functional.

Paul turned his attention to a nearby open window. That looked just

too inviting; could that possibly be the trap? He rubbed his jaw thoughtfully, then shook his head before turning his gaze back to the ring handle.

Once again the lighting was poor, but he dare not take the risk of touching the light switch. Paul wondered how he could possibly open the heavy door without using his hands. For one brief moment he thought of turning it rapidly, then running into the night, getting as far as possible from this mad situation. He shuddered; after coming this far, he would be a fool to risk his life in a moment of blind panic, playing right into Sebastian's hands.

The nearby side-table contained a large piece of cloth. Paul stared at it thoughtfully, then realized a possible solution to his problem.

He removed his neck-scarf and carefully folded it lengthwise. He patiently inserted it through the iron ring. Holding the scarf taut, he began to rotate it anti-clockwise. As he turned his arms began to quiver, and despite the lingering heat in the house, his teeth were chattering. The tension remained until the latch suddenly clicked. Still rigidly holding the scarf he very slowly pulled the door ajar.

He felt the evening breeze cool his perspiring features; exuberantly he stepped onto the stone porch. Gulping the fresh air with joyous relief, he trembled with a new feeling of excitement. The ordeal was over; unashamedly he wiped the tears from his eyes.

Paul's exultation was short lived. The triumphant mood rapidly faded as he noticed Sebastian grinning down at him. He was pointing a revolver straight at Paul's chest.

He turned to Sebastian with hate-filled eyes; after what he had just been through, fear became secondary to a sudden rage. "You didn't keep your word — you meant to shoot me all the time."

Sebastian continued to smile as Paul reached out desperately for the weapon. He was surprised at the ease in which he was able to wrest the gun from Sebastian's hand.

With a snarl of triumph, Paul now held the pistol in his own hand menacingly. "Whose turn is it to start sweating now, eh!"

He had barely finished the sentence when he felt a sharp prick on his forefinger. For one second he gazed with horror at the trigger before dropping the gun onto the stone porch.

Just as consciousness was dimming, he heard Sebastian's soothing drawl.

"I never lie Paul. The gun isn't loaded."

The House Party

At

Smoky Island

by L. M. Montgomery

WHEN MADELINE STANWYCK ASKED me to join her house party at Smoky Island I was not at first disposed to do so. It was too early in the season, and there would be mosquitoes. One mos-

A round of ghost stories laid the phantoms of an unsolved mystery.

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quito can keep me more awake than a bad conscience: and there are millions of mosquitoes in Muskoka.

"No, no, the season for them is over," Madeline assured me. Madeline would say anything to get her way.

"The mosquito season is never over in Muskoka," I said, as grumpily as anyone could speak to Madeline. "They thrive up there at zero. And even if by some miracle there are no mosquitoes, I've no hankering to be chewed to pieces by black flies."

Even Madeline did not dare to say there would be no black flies, so she wisely fell back on her Madelinity.

"Please come, for my sake," she said wistfully. "It wouldn't be a real party for me if you weren't there, Jim darling."

I am Madeline's favorite cousin, twenty years her senior, and she calls everybody darling when she wants to get something out of him. Not but that Madeline . . . but this story is not about Madeline. It is about an occurrence which took place at Smoky Island. None of us pretends to understand it, except the Judge, who pretends to understand everything. But he really understands it no better than the rest of us. His latest explanation is that we were all hypnotized and in the state of hypnosis saw and remembered things we couldn't otherwise have seen or remembered. But even he cannot explain who or what hypnotized us.

I decided to yield, but not all at once. "Has your Smoky Island housekeeper still got that detestable white parrot?" I asked.

"Yes, but it is much better-mannered than it used to be," assured Madeline. "And you know you have always liked her cat."

"Who'll be in your party? I'm rather finicky as to the company I keep."

Madeline grinned. "You know I never invite anyone but interesting people to my parties" — I bowed to the implied compliment — "with a dull one or two to show off the sparkle of the rest of us" — I did not bow this time — "Consuelo Anderson . . . Aunt Alma . . . Professor Tennant and his wife . . . Dick Lane . . . Tod Newman . . . Old Nosey . . . Min Ingram . . . Judge Walden . . . Mary Harland . . . and a few Bright Young Things to amuse *me*."

I ran over the list in my mind, not disapprovingly. Consuelo was a very fat girl with a B. A. degree. I liked her because she could sit still for a longer time than any other woman I know. Tennant was professor of something he called the New Pathology — an insignificant little man with a gigantic intellect. Dick Lane was one of those coming men who never seem to arrive, but a frank, friendly, charming fellow enough.

"Had Anthony given Susette that over-dose of chloral—given it purposely?"



Illustration by Vincent Napoli

Mary Harland was a comfortable spinster, Tod an amusing little fop, Aunt Alma a sweet, silvery-haired thing like a Whistler mother. Old Nosey—whose real name was Miss Alexander and who never let anyone forget that she had nearly sailed on the *Lusitania*—and the Malcolms had no terrors for me, although the Senator always called his wife "Kittens". And Judge Warden was an old crony of mine. I did not like Min Ingram, who had a rapier-like tongue, but she could be ignored, along with the Bright Young Things.

"Is that all?" I asked cautiously.

"Well . . . Doctor Armstrong and Brenda, of course," said Madeline, eyeing me as if it were not at all of course.

"Is that—wise?" I said slowly.

Madeline crumpled. "Of course not," she said miserably. "It will likely spoil everything. But John insists on it . . . you know he and Anthony Armstrong have been pals all their lives. And Brenda and I have always been chummy. It would look so funny if we didn't have them. I don't know what has got into her. We all *know* Anthony never poisoned Susette."

"Brenda doesn't know it, apparently," I said.

"Well, she ought to!" snapped Madeline. "As if Anthony could have poisoned anyone! But that's one of the reasons I particularly want you to come."

"Ah, now we're getting at it. But why *me*?"

"Because you've more influence over Brenda than anyone else . . . oh, yes, you have. If you could get her to open up . . . talk to her . . . you might help her. Because . . . if something doesn't help her soon she'll be beyond help. You know that."

I knew it well enough. The case of the Anthony Armstrongs was worrying us all. We saw a tragedy being enacted before our eyes and we could not lift a finger to help. For Brenda would not talk and Anthony had never talked.

The story, now five years old, was known to all of us, of course. Anthony's first wife had been Susette Wilder. Of the dead nothing but good; so I will say of Susette only that she was very beautiful and very rich. Luckily her fortune had come to her unexpectedly by the death of an aunt and cousin after she had married Anthony, so that he could not be accused of fortune-hunting. He had been wildly in love with Susette at first, but after they had been married a few years I don't think he had much affection left for her. None of the rest of us had ever had any to begin with. When word came back from California—where Anthony had taken her one winter for her nerves—that she was dead I don't suppose anyone felt any regret, nor any suspicion when we heard that she had died from an overdose of chloral; rather mysteriously, to be sure, for Susette was neither careless nor suicidally inclined. There were some ugly rumors, especially when it became known that Anthony had inherited her entire fortune under her will; but nobody ever dared say much openly. We, who knew and loved Anthony, never paid any heed to the hints. And when, two years later, he married Brenda Young,

we were all glad. Anthony, we said, would have some real happiness now.

For a time he did have it. Nobody could doubt that he and Brenda were ecstatically happy. Brenda was a sincere, spiritual creature, lovely after a fashion totally different from Susette. Susette had had gold hair and eyes as cool and green as fluorspar. Brenda had slim, dark distinction, hair that blended with the dusk, and eyes so full of twilight that it was hard to say whether they were blue or gray. She loved Anthony so terribly that sometimes I thought she was tempting the gods.

Then—slowly, subtly, remorselessly—the change set in. We began to feel that there was something wrong—very wrong—between the Armstrongs. They were no longer quite so happy . . . they were not happy at all . . . they were wretched. Brenda's old delightful laugh was never heard, and Anthony went about his work with an air of abstraction that didn't please his patients. His practice had fallen off awhile before Susette's death, but it had picked up and grown wonderfully. Now it began dropping again. And the worst of it was that Anthony didn't seem to care. Of course he didn't need it from a financial point of view, but he had always been so keenly interested in his work.

I don't know whether it was merely surmise or whether Brenda had let a word slip, but we all knew or felt that a horrible suspicion possessed her. There was some whisper of an anonymous letter, full of vile innuendoes, that had started the trouble. I never knew the rights of that, but I did know that Brenda had become a haunted woman.

Had Anthony given Susette that over-dose of chloral—given it purposely?

If she had been the kind of woman who talks things out, some of us might have saved her. But she wasn't. It's my belief that she never said one word to Anthony of the cold horror of distrust that was poisoning her life. But he must have felt she suspected him, and between them was the chill and shadow of a thing that must not be spoken of.

At the time of Madeline's house party the state of affairs between the Armstrongs was such that Brenda had almost reached the breaking-point. Anthony's nerves were tense, too, and his eyes were almost as tragic as hers. We were all ready to hear that Brenda had left him or done something more desperate still. And nobody could do a thing to help, not even I, in spite of Madeline's foolish hopes. I couldn't go to Brenda and say, "Look here, you know, Anthony never thought of such a thing as poisoning Susette." After all, in spite of our surmises, the trouble might be something else altogether. And if she did suspect him, what

proof could I offer her that would root the obsession out of her mind?

I hardly thought the Armstrongs would go to Smoky Island, but they did. When Anthony turned on the wharf and held out his hand to assist Brenda from the motor-boat, she ignored it, stepping swiftly off without any assistance and running up through the rock garden and the pointed firs. I saw Anthony go very white. I felt a little sick myself. If matters had come to such a pass that she shrank from his mere touch, disaster was near.

Smoky Island was in a little blue Muskoka lake and the house was called the Wigwam . . . probably because nothing on Earth could be less like a wigwam. The Stanwyck money had made a wonderful place of it, but even the Stanwyck money could not buy fine weather. Madeline's party was a flop. It rained every day more or less for the week, and though we all tried heroically to make the best of things I don't think I ever spent a more unpleasant time. The parrot's manners were no better, in spite of Madeline's assurances. Min Ingram had brought an aloof, disdainful dog with her that everyone hated because he despised us all. Min herself kept passing out needle-like insults when she saw anyone in danger of being comfortable. I thought the Bright Young Things seemed to hold *me* responsible for the weather. All our nerves got edgy except Aunt Alma's. Nothing ever upset Aunt Alma. She prided herself a bit on that.

On Saturday the weather wound up with a regular downpour and a wind that rushed out of the black-green pines to lash the Wigwam and then rushed back like a maddened animal. The air was as full of torn, flying leaves as of rain, and the lake was a splutter of tossing waves. This charming day ended in a dank, streaming night.

And yet things had seemed a bit better than any day yet. Anthony was away. He had got some mysterious telegram just after breakfast, had taken the small motor-boat, and gone to the mainland. I was thankful, for I felt I could no longer endure seeing a man's soul tortured as his was. Brenda had kept her room all day on the good old plea of a headache. I won't say it wasn't a relief. We all felt the strain between her and Anthony like a tangible thing.

"Something—*something*—is going to happen," Madeline kept saying to me. She was really worse than the parrot.

After dinner we all gathered around the fireplace in the hall, where a cheerful fire of white birchwood was glowing; for although it was June the evening was cold. I settled back with a sigh of relief. After all, nothing lasted forever, and this infernal house party would be over on Monday.

Besides, it was really quite comfortable and cheerful here, despite rattling windows and wailing winds and rain-swept panes. Madeline turned out the electric lights, and the firelight was kind to the women, who all looked quite charming. Some of the Bright Young Things sat cross-legged on the floor with arms around one another quite indiscriminately as far as sex was concerned . . . except one languid, sophisticated creature in orange velvet and long amber ear-rings, who sat on a low stool with a lapful of silken housekeeper's cat, giving everyone an excellent view of the bones in her spine. Min's dog posed haughtily on the rug, and the parrot in his cage was quiet—for him—only telling us once in a while that he or someone else was devilish clever. Mrs. Howey, the housekeeper, insisted on keeping him in the hall, and Madeline had to wink at it because it was hard to get a housekeeper in Muskoka even for a Wigwam.

The Judge was looking like a chuckle because he had solved a jigsaw puzzle that had baffled everyone, and the Professor and Senator, who had been arguing stormily all day, were basking in each other's regard for a foeman worthy of his steel. Consuelo was sitting still, as usual. Mrs. Tennant and Aunt Alma were knitting pullovers. Kittens, her fat hands folded across her satin stomach, was surveying her Senator adoringly, and Miss Nosey was taking everything in. We were, for the time being, a contented, congenial bunch of people and I did not see why Madeline should have suddenly proposed that each of us tell a ghost story, but she did. It was an ideal night for ghost stories, she averred. She hadn't heard any for ages and she understood that everybody had had at least one supernatural occurrence in his or her life.

"I suppose," said Professor Tennant a little belligerently, "that you would call anyone an ass who believed in ghost?"

The Judge carefully fitted his fingertips together before he replied. "Oh, dear, no. I would not so insult asses."

"Of course if you don't *believe* in ghosts they can't happen," said Consuelo.

"Some people are able to see ghosts and some are not," announced Dick Lane. "It's simply a gift."

"A gift I was not dowered with," said Kittens complacently.

Mary Harland shuddered. "What a dreadful thing it would be if the dead really came back!"

"From ghoulies and ghaisties and langedged beasties, And things that go bump in the night, Good Lord, deliver us," quoted Ted flip-pantly.

But Madeline was not to be sidetracked. Her little elfish face, under its crown of russet hair, was alive with determination.

"We're going to spook a bit," she said resolutely. "This is just the sort of night for ghosts to walk. Only of course they can't walk here because the Wigwam isn't haunted, I'm sorry to say. Wouldn't it be heavenly to live in a haunted house? Come now, everyone must tell a ghost story. Professor Tennant, you lead off. Something nice and creepy, please."

To my surprise, the Professor did lead off, although Mrs. Tennant's expression plainly informed us that she didn't approve of juggling with ghosts. He told a very good story, too—punctuated with snorts from the Judge—about a house he knew which had been haunted by the voice of a dead child who joined in every conversation bitterly and vindictively. The child had, of course, been ill-treated and murdered, and its body was eventually found under the hearthstone of the library. Then Dick told a tale about a dead dog that avenged its master, and Consuelo amazed me by spinning a really gruesome yarn of a ghost who came to the wedding of her lover with her rival . . . Consuelo said she knew the people. Ted knew a house in which you heard voices and footfalls where no voices or footfalls could be, and even Aunt Alma told of "a white lady with a cold hand" who asked you to dance with her. If you were reckless enough to accept the invitation you never lost the feeling of her cold hand in yours. This chilly apparition was always garbed in the costume of the Seventies.

"Fancy a ghost in a crinoline," giggled a Bright Young Thing.

Min Ingram, of all people, had seen a ghost and took it quite seriously.

"Well, show me a ghost and I'll believe in it," said the Judge, with another snort.

"Isn't he devilish clever?" croaked the parrot.

Just at this point Brenda drifted downstairs and sat down behind us all, for tragic eyes burning out of her white face. I had a feeling that there, in that calm, untroubled scene, full of good-humored, tolerably amused, commonplace people, a human heart was burning at the stake in agony.

Something fell over us with Brenda's coming. Min Ingram's dogs suddenly whined and flattened himself out on the rug. It occurred to me that it was the first time I had ever seen him looking like a real dog. I wondered idly what had frightened him. The housekeeper's cat sat up, its back bristling, slid from the orange velvet lap and slunk out of the hall. I had a queer sensation in the roots of what hair I had left,

so I turned hastily to the slim, dark girl on the oak settle at my right.

"You haven't told us a ghost story yet, Christine. It's your turn."

Christine smiled. I saw the Judge looking admiringly at her ankles, sheathed in chiffon hose. The Judge always had an eye for a pretty ankle. As for me, I was wondering why I couldn't recall Christine's last name and why I felt as if I had impelled in some odd way to make that commonplace remark to her.

"Do you remember how firmly Aunt Elizabeth believed in ghosts?" said Christine. "And how angry it used to make her when I laughed at the idea? I am . . . wiser now."

"I remember," said the Senator in a dreamy way.

"It was your Aunt Elizabeth's money that went to the first Mrs. Armstrong, wasn't it?" said one of the Bright Young Things, nicknamed Tweezers. It was an abominal thing for anyone to say, right there before Brenda. But nobody seemed horrified. I had another odd feeling that it *had* to be said and who but Tweezers would say it? I had another feeling . . . that ever since Brenda's entrance every trifle was important, every tone was of profound significance, every word had a hidden meaning. Was I developing nerves?

"Yes," said Christine evenly.

"Do you suppose Susette Armstrong really took that overdose of chloral on purpose?" went on Tweezers unbelievably.

Not being near enough to Tweezers to assassinate her, I looked at Brenda. But Brenda gave no sign of having heard. She was staring fixedly at Christine.

"No," said Christine. I wondered how she knew, but there was no question whatsoever in my mind that she did know it. She spoke as one having authority. "Susette had no attention of dying. And yet she was doomed, although she never suspected it. She had an incurable disease which would have killed her in a few months. Nobody knew that except Anthony and me. And she had come to hate Anthony so. She was going to change her will the very next day—leave everything away from him. She told me so. I was furious. Anthony, who had spent his life doing good to suffering creatures, was to be left poor and struggling again, after his practice had been all shot to pieces by Susette's goings-on. I had loved Anthony ever since I had known him. He didn't know it—but Susette did. Trust her for that. She used to twit me with it. Not that it mattered . . . I knew he would never care for me. But I saw my chance to do something for him and I took it. I gave Susette that overdose of chloral. I loved him enough for that . . . and for *this*."

Somebody screamed. I have never known whether it was Brenda or not. Aunt Alma—who was never upset over anything—was huddled in her chair in hysterics. Kittens, her fat figure shaking, was clinging to her Senator, whose foolish, amiable face was gray—absolutely gray. Min Ingram was on her knees and the Judge was trying to keep his hands from shaking by clenching them together. His lips were moving and I know I caught the word, "God." As for Tweezers and all the rest of her gang, they were no longer Bright Young Things but simply shivering, terrified children.

I felt sick—very, very sick. *Because there was no one on the oak settle and none of us had ever known or heard of the girl I had called Christine.*

At that moment the hall door opened a dripping Anthony entered. Brenda flung herself hungrily against him, wet as he was.

"Anthony . . . Anthony, forgive me," she sobbed.

Something good to see came into Anthony's worn face.

"Have you been frightened, darling?" he said tenderly. "I'm sorry I was so late. There was really no danger. I waited to get an answer to my wire to Los Angeles. You see I got word this morning that Christine Latham had been killed in a motor accident yesterday evening. She was Susette's second cousin and nurse . . . a dear, loyal little thing. I was very fond of her. I'm sorry you've had such an anxious evening, sweetheart."



Settler's Wall

by Robert A. W. Lowndes

WHILE I AM NOT the most tidy of persons when it comes to some of my effects—books and records are in order, but every time I open a drawer of my desk, I groan and vow to put things in shape next week—I do like to see things worked out thoroughly, and that is why I have been reluctant to tell this story, even in the guise of fiction. I was not there at the finale, nor was anyone else; no living person actually saw what happened; the only evidence is some photographs, and while the camera may not lie, some first-class liars are very adept at working with cameras.

It happened in 1934, when my cousin, Arthur Gordon, was spending a summer in the CCC camp at Flagstaff, Maine. The Great Depression may have passed its nadir by then, but it was far from over, and I had been fortunate enough to get into a publishing venture with a high school acquaintance, Will Richards. If it did not make us rich, at least it kept us ahead of the Big Bad Wolf; our *Advertiser* covered the Stamford—Norwalk area, and we had reached the point where we would have to decide whether to expand further or see if we could settle down

"This wall has never hurt anybody, but some folk have hurt themselves trying to pry into its secrets."

An earlier and shorter version of this story was published as *The Long Wall*, by Wilfred Owen Morley in the March 1942 issue of *STIRRING SCIENCE STORIES* and is copyright 1941 by Albing Publications.

comfortably in our present slot. The immediate decision was to take a brief vacation and let the question ferment in our subconscious for a time. And why not, Will asked, drive up to Maine, see Arthur and get a look at what the CCC was doing up there, and then roam a bit before heading back?

Why not indeed? We did it, transporting a fair number of Arthur's colleagues back toward their camps or toward their homes, depending upon whether they were going on leave or returning, and found the 178th Company at Flagstaff to be a very good deal for a young fellow who was willing to do an honest day's work, and conform to a reasonable amount of discipline. It wasn't army-degree discipline, but nonetheless, the reserve army and navy officers who commanded the camps could make life uncomfortable for the fellow who tried to buck the system, or just wouldn't make the effort to fit in. The already-delinquent youth (I don't recall whether that term was used then) didn't last; he went out with a DD (Dishonorable Discharge) rather soon. But I could see that there were many, who might have crossed the line into delinquency otherwise, for whom this was exactly the opportunity they so urgently needed; and they were taking it.

There were no provisions at the camp itself for overnight visitors, but we found friendly and adequate accommodations near the village of Flagstaff, and the coolness of early morning found us on the way to Skowhegan. Just where we had planned to go after reaching the town, I no longer recall—Will said something about acquaintances up here—nor does it matter, because we did not reach Skowhegan that day. In 1934 road signs throughout New England existed, of course, but they were sparse compared to 1968; and while I have not been back to Maine, I wouldn't be astonished to find that area considerably changed.

Mrs. Wing gave us directions, which amounted to looking for some sort of barn "down the rud a mite", where we should keep to the right, and then another landmark a mile beyond that, where we would make a turn, etc. Arthur had warned us about the local conceptions of distance, and there were various of his associates in camp who averred that the standard of a mile in Maine was the distance that a healthy and startled pony could run before it dropped; everything, everything mind you, was "down the rud a mite". And we'd be on dirt roads for quite a time.

Eventually, we came to a sign (predicted) and later on we came to a branching in the road, which had been left a surprise to us. Exactly one car had passed us, and we had passed all of three habitations—very decent looking farmhouses. July in Maine, Arthur said, makes you

forget things like the fact that when he arrived in camp near the end of April, there were still four-foot snowbanks to be seen.

Although we were on vacation, and we weren't really going anywhere, I was beginning to get the feeling that we ought to stop at the next house and see if we could get our bearings. I rolled down the side window, knocked my pipe speculatively against the frame, chipping off still more of the faded blue paint, and wondered aloud if we had made the correct turn.

Will Richards looked at his wristwatch. "Obviously, Clyde, we didn't. By now we'd be on some sort of improved road, and close to Skow if not there." He sidled the car to a stop. "Let's rest awhile, rouse out the maps, and take our bearings after a sandwich or two."

There wasn't a breath of air stirring as we emerged onto the tufty grass, and the clouds in the sky seemed to have been painted there. It was a dry heat, though, and the only real discomfort was the cramps one got from driving along dirt roads in a vintage 1927 Ford. The tea in the thermos bottle was cool enough, and Mrs. Wing's sandwiches both tasty and moist enough.

Will picked up a pebble and threw it across the road, where it bounced off the high wall on the left side. "That's quite a thing, isn't it?"

And right then, I had the oddest feeling. I had seen this wall and yet not really noticed it, even though it extended as far as we could see in either direction. There were no markings on it visible from across the road; and when we got around to examining it close up, we found none still. Our guess that it was ten feet high turned out to be correct; and there it rose, dull, gray and well weathered. Within the range of our vision, there was not a single distinguishing sign; at no point did grass eclipse it, or vines, or trees. In fact, the grass ended just about a foot away from it, in as straight a line as one could imagine, and the well-packed earth between the end of the grass and the wall itself was perfectly clean. Not a leaf--well, of course; there were no trees anywhere near--not a pebble (the one Will had thrown, must have bounced back into the grass; I hadn't thought he'd thrown it that hard). We stood in front of it and turned our heads first to the left and then to the right; the wall ran parallel to the road, straighter than the road, and we could not see the end of it in either direction.

"It must be miles long," Will said softly, then, as if wondering why he had dropped his voice so, he cleared his throat to pick it up again. "Did you notice when we hit it?"

I shook my head. "Wait," I said. "It was right after we went over

that bump in the road. Or was it a hole? Anyway, I felt a jolt, and I'm sure the wall began just a little beyond that."

"You know, something like this ought to be marked on the map. Or at least there ought to be some sort of sign saying, 'You are now two miles from the famous Long Wall', or something like that. And you'd think that Mrs. Wing or Arthur or someone would have mentioned it."

I looked out over the open meadow to the right of the road, which eventually ran into wooded hills near the horizon. There was no sign of human habitation or occupancy visible. In the distance, I could see birds in the sky, but around us there had been no signs of life at all: not an ant, not a spider, not a fly, not a yellowjack, not a beetle, not a snake.

"And who built it and why?" Will was going on. "A ten foot high wall this length just doesn't get built ten-twenty miles from nowhere, for no reason at all. You know, it doesn't really look as if there's been anyone living around here for an awful long time. I guess maybe the land was cleared once, since it isn't all forest now—or maybe there were natural meadows here to begin with. Have to ask a Naturalist about that some time but I suppose it has a lot to do with the way the soil quality can shift here and there. I'll bet we're miles from the nearest house of any kind."

I was listening, but not only to Will. "Have you noticed how quiet it's been since we came upon this wall?" I walked right up to it—we'd been standing at a respectful distance—and scrutinized it the way a sleuth is supposed to examine evidence, magnifying glass or no magnifying glass. "You know, it looks as if it's made of one piece. I don't see a sign of separate stones; this is not stucco or concrete—and it can't be metal."

Will joined me and laid his hand upon the surface. "Feels like stone, all right. But it ought to be a little hotter. . . . Clyde, put your palm on it like this."

I followed his lead, and nodded. "Not quite smooth, but even so you'd think it would have picked up more heat on a day like this."

"Well—it's about 12:30. What say we take a little walk before going on. Half hour's exercise."

I am not a devotee of exercise for its own sake, but I'll walk twenty miles with a minimum of complaint—well, three—if there's what appears to me to be a good reason for it. And my curiosity was aroused almost to the point where it matched my ever-present desire to see the new issue

of my favorite science fiction magazines, even if it meant a hike to a nearby town—usually Darien. (Up to very recently this had often been a necessity, when subscriptions ran out and I didn't have the renewal price; and gas couldn't be wasted just so I could pick up a new issue the day it appeared on the stands.) I said to Will, "Look, you start down that way and I'll go this way; I want to walk around this thing. We'll meet after awhile."

Will looked at me in silence, since this was the first indication he'd ever had that I was willing to indulge in any sort of physical exertion that wasn't positively necessary. "It may be longer than you think. A lot longer."

"Well, then let's walk in different directions for fifteen minutes. At 12:45 we stop, turn and see if the other is in sight, then head back toward the car."

So I started briskly (briskly for me, anyway) down the road, whistling between my teeth. Why was this wall ten feet high? How had it been made? Nothing about it changed in any way as I strode along; it still looked and felt like stone, and there were still no breaks or joins anywhere in it, no cavities, no irregularities, and nothing growing near enough to it to touch it in any way.

And what was behind it? I could see nothing but the sky above. What about the upkeep? How had it been kept so clear? I examined the line of grass that ended a foot from the wall and was sure that this was not kept that way by a gardener; there were no signs of cutting; no, it grew that way. Soil differences again? Soil differences following a perfectly straight line, parallel to a perfectly straight wall? Then why hadn't the road been made straight?

And why hadn't we been bothered by insects during lunch time? Mrs. Wing's jelly sandwiches certainly should have roused up the yellow jacks. At least one grasshopper should have come into sight, not to mention butterflies; and the grass was the sort of grass where one found daddy-long-legs; and flies . . . I shook my head, lit up the last cigarette in the pack I was carrying (I'm omniverous when it comes to tobacco), and crumpled up the empty package, tossing it against the base of the wall. A moment later, I went back to look at it; the crumpled package was in the grass, not lying on the bare strip.

I continued and then saw something up ahead, on the other side of the road. A few minutes later, it was identifiable as a parked car. Someone had been driving not too far ahead of us, obviously, and had also stopped, very possibly to examine this wall, I thought. A second thought

told me that this conclusion was unwarranted, requiring that the party ahead also be a tourist; it might just as easily be a native of the district to whom the wall was a commonplace. But if that were the case, then perhaps we could get some information. I looked at my watch. 12:45; I turned and peered carefully behind me, but Will wasn't in sight. Well, it would do no harm to go a bit farther and see who was there up ahead.

Up to this point, there had been peculiarities, things that made one wonder, things which you would tell someone to elicit a whistle or a smile of disbelief at your attempt at a tall tale, but all of them, anomalous as they were, of the sort of piecemeal one could look back upon years later with a sort of pleasure. You would feel that there must be, there certainly was, some sort of entirely natural explanation, even if it included some rather bizarre human behavior and motivation. But there was nothing thus far that really threatened anyone, omitting the type of nervous wreck who feels threatened by just about anything unusual.

It was at this point, I say, that the wall ceased to be strange, unusual, amusing, fantastic, etc., and became shocking.

For the car up ahead was our own 1927 Ford, with badly chipped blue paint, parked over by the side just as we had left it. And when I turned around, to look behind me, there was Will Richards coming up, with an equally amazed expression on his face.

"Where did *you* come from?" I asked, then paused as I realized that we were speaking simultaneously.

He had walked for fifteen minutes in the direction opposite to my course; had stopped at 12:45, turned, seen nothing, started back, still seeing nothing between him and the car—then, suddenly, I was there.

I tried to say something about this being a two pipe problem, but my heart wasn't in it. Nonetheless, I knew I had to rest, and a little tobacco would offer tranquilization, since we had no other sort handy. We were torn between the desire to get into the car and drive away at top speed, and the feeling that we had to know more. I have often wondered if it would have been worse had we driven away, if we wouldn't have been virtually compelled to return. Well, there's no answering that; but somehow I've never been able to feel that it would have been *better*, had we taken a different course.

What we did, of course, after a rest period, was to try again; only this time, we walked together, in the same direction, the one I had taken which left the car behind us. We started out at exactly 1:15, and it was 1:24 when we passed the crumpled cigarette package. We looked at it then

continued, our eyes shifting from the wall to the road up ahead; the stillness, the absence of insect life was beginning to become a positive irritation.

"Watch closely, now," Will said. "If it's going to happen again, it should happen very soon. What's the time?"

"1:26", I said. We did not increase our pace, and Will let me set it; I kept as closely as I could to the stride I had used before, suppressing the urge to go faster with an effort. I kept my eyes fixed on the road ahead, on the right side of the road. There was nothing visible except the road itself, nothing but the meadow to the right, the wall to the left . . . nothing . . . nothing . . .

There!

"Time!" gasped Will. "What's the time?" He seemed to have forgotten that his own watch ran better than mine.

"1:33 exactly," I said, my eyes reluctantly moving from the dark speck over to the right of the road ahead of us. We both knew what it was. We were right.

2

TO SAY THAT THERE WERE more Wings around this part of the country than there are Smiths in the Manhattan telephone directory is to exaggerate, but not to give a false impression, really. The one at whose house we found accommodations for the night was named Thad, and he was a distant relative of the one we had spent last night with. The missus was away for a spell, he said, but he could handle things. I didn't see much physical resemblance, but he was like his relative in old-fashioned courtesy and friendliness. His comment upon the fact that we looked as if we'd had a rough time was put in just the right manner which indicated he'd listen with interest and sympathy if we wanted to talk, but not take offense if we didn't.

So after a hearty New England supper, we accepted his invitation to sit awhile on the porch, where the insect life was by no means lacking. But both Will and I wanted to talk so badly, we barely noticed.

I'm not going to try to reproduce anyone's enunciation of the local dialect. Not only does it make for tiresome reading after a sentence or two, it's like a marking in a music score which the composer hesitates to put in for fear it will be exaggerated, finally does, and then finds that his fears are generally realized. I tried to do it, anyway, and had to throw some pages away because it just isn't right. "You" comes out

"ye"; "catch", "ketch"; "your" "yer"; "now" "naow", etc. — but reading it back aloud, relying on memory as well as I could, I realized that I hadn't gotten it right. Let it pass. That should give you a general idea.

Thad Wing eased us into the subject by telling us some of the local gossip, pungent and bawdy quite a bit of it, and after a while, we started to talk about the wall, at which point he asked how it was we didn't see the sign indicating that that was a private road at the turnoff, which should have brought us on to the asphalt road to Skowhegan. I told him that there wasn't any such sign; we'd both been looking for a landmark (we actually found it after we got back onto the right road, Wing's place being the first we came to thereafter) and certainly would have seen it had it been there. He allowed that it might have been blown away last week, when there was a very high wind. Will continued up to the point where we'd found our car there by the side of the road ahead of us.

Wing struck a match on his shoe and applied it to the oversize bowl of his corncob. "What did you do when you found you couldn't walk around the wall, Mr. Richards?"

Will looked at me, then took a swallow of the hard cider with which we had been provided.

"Well," I started out, "the next thing we did was to see if we could find out what was on the other side. We walked back into the field over by the side of the wall until we could see beyond it."

"And what did you see, Mr. Cantrell?"

I sighed. "Nothing. That is, nothing unusual. There was apparently just an open field, running into wooded hills, like the side we were standing on. . . . I guess we would have turned around and gone back then if something hadn't happened."

"I slipped and went down to my knees," Will said. "I'd stepped on a little colored rubber ball. The red of it was faded, but there was a definite design on it that we could still see pretty clearly. I picked it up and threw it over the wall. I watched it—Clyde did, too—and it just barely cleared the wall, but we both saw it go over. It should have fallen just a little bit on the other side. There wasn't much bounce left in it—I don't think it would have bounced hardly at all.

"But when we got back to the car, my eye caught something in the grass across the road. I went over to it and picked it up. It was a rubber ball, and I'd swear it was *the same ball we had just seen drop over that wall.*"

"The markings were the same," I said. "Of course, Mr. Wing, there are lots of little rubber balls made with similar markings. But Will and

I had both walked along this way and even if the colors were faded, I just don't see how we could have missed noticing it there. The grass wasn't high enough to conceal it. It was just a little ahead of our car, on the grass in front of the wall—I couldn't have missed seeing it before . . . I couldn't."

"And I was looking at the wall all the time we were walking back to the car," Will added. "If someone on the other side had tossed it back, I'd have seen it coming over. . . . But that was just the start. I picked the ball up again and threw it over, high. You saw me do that, didn't you, Clyde?"

I nodded. "And there was no wind. It couldn't have blown back," I said.

"No . . . the air was perfectly still. . . . Well, I threw it over as I said, and turned around—and *there was the ball on the grass just a little beyond the car.*"

He paused and we both looked at Wing, expecting some sort of reaction of disbelief. But he nodded and rocked a little in his chair.

"Settler's wall is very unsettling," he said. "We're used to it, but it bothers people coming from outside. That's why the major's father put that sign up, back around the time Cleveland was running for re-election. Missed, he did—but made it next time. Oh . . . the sign's been replaced a few times, but we've tried to keep it there. Gets knocked down every once in a while, and this will be the second time it's just blown away. Next time I see the major, I'll have to tell him."

Will was deep in thought. "Settler," he said. "Major Settler. Now where have I heard that name before?"

"Well . . . he was a major before your time, Mr. Richards, and hasn't done anything to get himself in the papers since the scrap we had in Cuba when Teddy Roosevelt got things going." Wing rubbed the grizzle on his chin which passed for a beard. "Unless maybe you went to college a few years ago and came across his nephew then. Reckon you'd have had to, because Dave's name wasn't Settler."

"Wasn't . . ."

"Dave got himself drowned in a lake a spell back. Darn shame, too." Wing broke off in a way that suggested there was something more he could tell if he had a mind to.

"There was a Dave Fenner, who was a fraternity brother of mine at Columbia, in 1930 and 1931," Will said. "One of the reasons why I decided to come to Maine was that I hoped to look him up."

I sat there staring. It's amazing how you can know people, even work with them in close quarters for months, sometimes years, and not know them. Will had never mentioned going to Columbia, not even going to college for that matter. Something of what was going through my head must have penetrated to him, for he grinned rather lopsidedly at me.

"Yes, Clyde, I'm a certified Bachelor of Arts, graduated *summa cum laude* from Columbia in 1931. I'm a real Latin scholar—or I would have been. Can you think of any other specialty more useless in these times? I was a fool not to switch in 1930 to something more practical—that's why I don't like to talk about college. But I did want to see if Dave was around. He'd concentrated on Latin, too, before he transferred to Columbia. I forget where he'd gone before. He didn't talk much about it, but he learned a lot of obscure Latin there."

"I've heard it mentioned," Wing said. "Housatonic? No—that's in Connecticut and a river, not a school. Something like that. It was around Massachusetts Bay, not too far from Marblehead. . . . But I've dragged you away from what you were telling about the wall. Did you try anything else?"

"Yes. I picked up the ball and was going to throw it over again with all my strength, but Clyde stopped me. We took a paper plate we had in the trunk and wrote our names on it. Then he skimmed it over the wall, and it sailed over as neatly as you could ask. Then we turned around and started looking for it behind us. . . . I'd say it took ten seconds to locate it."

Thad Wing poured himself another glass of cider and offered us refills from the jug; we did not refuse. "Most folks give up by that point," he said, "but I got a feeling that you two didn't. You look and talk as if you'd tried something else and got a still worse shock. Am I right?"

"You sure are!" I said. "Will was determined to try to climb over the wall. He worked for the telephone company for awhile as a linesman, and we had special climbing shoes in the car—figured we might tackle a mountain hereabouts—and plenty of rope. So I tied the rope around his waist, then gave him a hand up the wall, and grabbed hold of the rope so that he could climb down the other side, if he didn't want to jump, and give him a start when he wanted to come back.

"He got up to the top—there's enough room to stand there—and stood like a statue for a minute or so. Then he turned around, and his face was whiter than I ever saw it before. He didn't say anything, just nodded and started climbing down the other side while I let the rope

out, keeping it taut. . . . Then . . . the rope seemed to slip out of my hands . . . and . . . "

"And you found that he'd come down on the same side of the wall you were on, only you didn't see him coming," finished Wing. He nodded to Will. "And you, Mr. Richards, I reckon I know what gave you such a turn when you got on top of the wall and looked over to what was beyond it. You saw the same thing you saw on this side. You saw your car on the far side of the road, and I'll bet you saw Mr. Cantrell here looking up at you. . . . You see, it's all been tried before—but the fact of the matter is that *you can't walk around Settler's Wall and you can't go over it*. If you want my opinion—and the major holds to it likewise—there's only one side to that wall, the side you're on."

"But that's impossible!" I protested. "There's no such thing as a wall with only one side."

Wing chuckled. "That's the sort of thing us farmers are supposed to say when we see a giraffe. . . . I'll tell you what I can about the wall. It's been called Settler's Wall as long as anyone can remember, because it's on Settler property. But none of them built it.

"There's been Wings and Settlers here for a long time, and that property had belonged to the major's family since before the War of the Rebellion. Whether a Settler or a Wing was in these parts first doesn't make much difference, I guess. But nobody seems to have seen it much before 1840, or maybe the late 1830's, when they first started to clear the land in these parts.

"My father told me, and it's been passed down for quite a while now, 'There's a lot of things which may seem peculiar, but so long as they aren't hurting you any, or hurting anybody else, don't you bother about them. Leave them alone.' And that's the way it's been around here, that's the way we look at the wall, just about all of us. Settler's Wall has never harmed anybody, but a few folk have hurt themselves getting all het up about it."

"What happened to them?" I asked.

"The wall itself didn't do a thing to them," Wing said. "It just stayed there and paid no attention to them. But they couldn't let well enough alone, they just had to know all about it. A couple of them have gotten themselves brain fever and died of it. And Jim Garlan—he was the son of old Ben—but no use going into that—well, this was around the 80's, and he'd gone to universities in England and Germany; he was determined to solve the secret of the wall." Wing took another deep swallow of hard cider, then stuffed his pipe again.

"What happened to him?"

"Went mad. Didn't talk so that anyone else could make out any sense from it, not even the fancy doctors and professors who came here. It was a funny kind of Latin, they said he was talking, and a couple of the professors were pretty sure that he was quoting from some book, though it wasn't a book any of them had ever read. I think one of them had an inkling, but he wouldn't say anything—I got all this from my grandfather—except that Jim must have gotten access to a book in the British Museum that people weren't supposed to see. But that's all he would say, though my grandfather was sure he knew a lot more, except that the best thing to do about the wall was just to leave it alone.

"I'm sure Dave was more interested in it than was good for him . . . Tell you what, you being an old fraternity brother of his, I reckon the major would like to meet you. If you have time, we could go over there tomorrow, and I think the major would let you look at Dave's notebooks. None of us can read parts of them, because they're in Latin, too, and the only person around here who knows any says that it's too danged corrupt Latin." Thad Wing puffed away at his pipe, and I didn't feel like breaking the silence then.

"And if you want my opinion—because that's all it is, I don't know—I think the reason why Dave left that college in Massachusetts and shifted to New York was because he found out too much and had the sense to stop before he went off his head like Jim Garlan. They had old books locked up at that college, too, and what we could read of Dave's notebooks says that he got to see some of them. Well, the major and I, we both calculated a bit, and we figure that the books Dave was reading in corrupt Latin in 1926 and 1927 was the same books that Jim Garlan found in London. They were real old books, copied out by hand. . . . Dave used to correspond with a writer who lived in Rhode Island, and he'd get long letters from him every now and then. But when he came back from that place, he was a different person. He burned all the correspondence and I think he might have burned the notebooks, too, except perhaps he figured that no one could read them, and there were some things in them—personal things—that he didn't want to lose. Maybe he'd have copied those out and burned the rest if he'd lived. I don't know. One of those things where you have to say that just 'no-body knows, that's all.'"

Will turned to me. "What do you say, Clyde? Had enough of it or can you take a little more? Shall we go to see Major Settler?"

I HAVE OFTEN FELT IRRITATED, in reading weird fiction, when the author has taken the trouble to tell me that something is shocking—particularly when he has taken the trouble to present his material clearly—and now on looking back over this manuscript, I see that I have done the same thing myself. Perhaps I've been wrong and misjudged some of my favorite writers; for I see now one use of this term which strikes me as entirely legitimate. And that is why I have left that passage just as I first wrote it. I do not mean that *you* ought to find the matter referred to shocking, or again that you never never would unless I gave you the cue; what I was taking about was the effect that the experience of trying to walk around Settler's Wall had upon Will Richards and me.

It was more than upsetting; it had a profound effect not only on our nervous systems but also on our ability to think and reason with what I like to consider our normal ability. We were in something very much like a hypnotic situation, or at least like being under the spell of a first class stage magician who induces you to look where he wants you to look and thus be completely taken in by his illusions and deceptions. That was part of it; the astute reader has long since thought of something which just did not occur to either of us until the next morning.

Of course it was only a partial release, for it did not begin to explain everything, but it seemed like a major victory to me, when I awoke finally at the sound of the Wing contingent of roosters who, having done their essential duty earlier, were now rehearsing for the next morning; a thought hit my mind as daylight struck my opened eyes.

Will had preceded me to the bathroom. I looked at him carefully, wondering if it had occurred to him, too. But I didn't think it had; he just didn't look as if it had. So I yawned and said to him, "Hey, why don't we just try to get up to the wall from behind? Go around the back way?"

He dropped his razor, which was as much applause as I could ask for. I marched triumphantly down the hall to the bathroom and left him there, thinking that I'd better mark the date on the calendar, since I'd forgotten the last time I'd beaten him to the mental punch.

It was a fine day, and I enjoyed it heartily for all of ten or maybe fifteen minutes, until we went down to the breakfast table, met the neighbor who had come in to help, and, after a bit of desultory conversation,

I mentioned my idea. Thad Wing looked thoughtful and a little sympathetic, then murmured, "It's been tried."

He chewed on his ham for a moment then added. "Jim Garlan was the last to keep on trying and trying, and that was when he began to go queer. There's woods there, not too much different from the woods you see on the other side. . . . What happened was, every time Jim would work his way out of the woods, on to a meadow, and find himself on the other side of the wall, across the road. . . . You don't have to take my word for it, Mr. Cantrell. No law here against seeing for yourself."

The flavor went out of Mrs. Sully's fine Maine breakfast at that point. I knew that the last thing in the world I wanted was to go through that experience myself.

"What I don't understand—along with other things," Will said, "is why we've never heard about the wall before."

"Well . . . " Wing paused for a moment. "Don't want to sound offensive, don't mean any offense neither, but most folks around here just mind their own business. . . . Course it's no fault of yours that the sign was down; I'm sure you wouldn't have taken that road if you'd seen it. But the fact is that since the sign has been up hardly anyone except the major and his family have used the road, and folks just sort of generally agreed not to talk about the wall since Jim Garlan went crazy. Most people around here have never seen it or heard of it. And those of us who have leave it alone and it leaves us alone."

Wing started to talk about something else, I guess to assure us that he didn't mean anything personal and that we hadn't stepped on *his* toes in any way. After breakfast, we got into his buckboard and rode over to the Settler's. Just like that; no telephoning, though Wing had a windup telephone in his kitchen—a three party line affair. He sort of appreciated our adventure, he said, because he hadn't seen the major for a spell, and this gave him a good reason to drop in.

Later, we learned that this period of "a spell" was over two years. Settler and Wing had had a little disagreement and stopped talking to each other, each of them willing to be friends again if the other would just make the first move. So something good came out of our discovery of the wall after all.

Unless you have rubber bones, I do not recommend the buckboard as a desirable means of travel over unimproved roads. It did, however, help to take the edge of the feeling of dull horror that had crept back over me. I was somewhere in between the feeling of wanting to crawl into a cave and go to sleep, hoping to awaken in a different world, where

something like Settler's Wall really couldn't exist, and a morbid fascination which kept me wanting to see this thing through, though to what end I couldn't imagine.

Major Horace Wingate Settler, U.S.A. (ret.) looked the part to perfection. Take the build of Theodore Roosevelt, but remove the glasses; and something of the stoical quietness of Calvin Coolidge—who *could* talk when he had a mind to—but pour in more warmth; a touch of the friendly but firm sincerity of Eisenhower, in situations where his command of self expression has not been shot away, and you have our initial impressions.

He greeted Thad Wing as if he hadn't seen him for a week or so, and they talked a bit after we'd been welcomed and made comfortable upon the porch. After awhile, Wing gave a concise report upon how we'd happened to come across the wall, and our experiences, mentioning that Will had been a classmate of Dave's at Columbia.

The major thawed visibly at that. "Seem to recall Dave mentioning some fraternity brother named Will. Well, if you can read what he wrote in his notebooks, we'd sure like to find out. About the wall, we all reckon. Not mine. I never built it and neither did anyone else. That wall was here when we first came here, and folks around swore at the time they knew nothing about it. You can't find any mention of it, even in Indian legends. It was just there, somewhere around 1840."

I didn't feel like arguing, and neither did Will, I could see. It was obvious to both of us that the major and his forbears had solved the problem of the wall in their own way; they ignored it. The only thing they'd talk about was the unpleasant results of getting too curious.

"Nope, it never hurt anyone who didn't get too close to it, and didn't try to pry too far," the major went on. "Never did anyone a lick of good, either. But you're welcome to look it over in any way you want to except one. Damnation, you can tear it down and cart it away if you can figure out how to do that, so long as you don't do any damage to the rest of the property or make me liable for anything."

"What's the one thing that's ruled out, sir?" I asked.

"Trying to dig under it. That was what drove Jim Garland crazy, and a couple others before him got brain fever and died." He got up showing little traces of age. "Set now, and I'll bring you Dave's notebook. Reckon Thad would like to hear what you can make out of it. No hurt if it's all Chinese to you—nobody else has been able to make much sense out of it."

"You mean," I asked, "that no one has been able to translate anything in it at all?"

"Nope, some have got words and sentences all right. But what they got didn't leave us any better off than before."

He was back a few moments later, during which time Wing told us that the major's cousin's family lived here and took care of the place. We might see them later if the visit took that long. I got the impression that, so long as we behaved ourselves and were of interest, we could stay for days, as Wing's paying guest. When the others had nothing else important to do, they'd visit with us; when they did, we were on our own. The younger ones had daily tasks, but Wing and the major worked when they felt like it—which was more often than not.

Dave had attended a college in Massachusetts before coming to Columbia. Will had thought he'd started college late, but we found out now that he'd had a breakdown at "that place" and was out for a year or so before continuing. The college to which he had gone at first wasn't named, though I suspected that Wing really did recall the name. But the custom here was to refer to it, if one positively had to mention it at all, only as "that place". The major had closed the iron door upon it.

Settler re-appeared now with a medium sized copybook under his arm. "Never did think much of that place," he started out, "but Dave wanted to do research in Italy and other countries. Had the notion from reading about da Vinci that some of those other old writers came across some useful military ideas that got overlooked, because they were so obscure in the way they wrote things down. He'd need a real foundation in medieval Latin and maybe earlier and figured that place was the only school in the East which had the facilities for him. So I had to allow that it might be worth taking the risk."

He filled up his pipe and lit it carefully. "Wasn't a pacifist, but I could see that he wouldn't make a good soldier for an army career. Heart wasn't in it. He'd do his duty if the war broke out again, but otherwise, no. Sort of disappointed me at first, but then I started thinking. Had lots of time to think after my wife died. That's why those Germans came so close to beating the world. They did research. They worked out new ideas. Can't win a war with old ideas that everybody knows about, no matter how many men you have. May not be so long before the Japanese or the Russians, or even the Germans again, come up with new ideas and make another try. We have to keep ahead of them." He puffed on his pipe. "Education plus imagination. That's what the army needs up at the top. I didn't have the education. Just had notions

and didn't have the sense to keep them to myself. Found myself retired. . . . But figured if Dave learned something important, and we could get someone with a West Point background interested enough, we'd be doing the country a real service."

In the next half hour, while I tried to restrain my impatience, we learned that the League of Nations was on a par with the league of mice which solemnly decided that the way to security was putting a bell on the cat, and that disarmament was the next thing to treason. There were other countries who signed pacts and continued to re-arm secretly, etc., and if we didn't have some new ideas to match them when they were ready to move, etc. Letting the Japanese take over Manchuria should have shown any intelligent person how worthless the League was, and with the kind of government we had now, it was just as well we were out of it, etc. I tried not to glance too often at the notebook in the major's lap, and even to make some intelligent remarks when Wing moved the conversation into the North's state of unpreparedness when anyone could see that the South was going to secede and there would be war.

Eventually, the notebook was in Will's hands, and he was puzzling over the first paragraph in Latin. Finally, he looked up. "It's a quotation," he said, "from a book that Dave identifies only as 'AA'—must be one of the rare ones at . . . that place. I think I can make out what it says." He cleared his throat, and read slowly.

"'There is that which is not of the malignancy of those which serve the elder ones, yet scholars say that it has somewhat of a passive alliance with them. It is in space yet not in space, in time yet not in time, and many and manifold are the prodigies that attend it. It moves not after it comes, nor does it harm any who pay it no heed. Yet cruel is the compulsion it has upon those who come near, and fearful the magic it enacts upon them, that they become locked in its spell which leads to madness. Seek not to go around nor over, lest you be captured, and dig not in there toward that which lies beneath. The spells of . . . I can't make this out . . . ' avail not, nor does any demon impart knowledge of it. It comes in the time of . . . well, something—I cannot grasp the reference . . . 'and goes when the time is departed.

The major let his breath out. "Dang it, that's better than anyone else has been able to do. And you learned that much Latin at Columbia?" The major swore to himself for a moment. "Then Dave never had to go to that place at all!"

Will shook his head. "I've read some other things, sir, which gave me

an idea of what to look for—particularly when you said that Dave had been studying at . . . "

"It's about the wall, all right, wouldn't you say so, Thad?" Wing nodded vigorously. "Of course we were pretty sure it was. But this ties things together. There's been others like it in the past, and this is a sort of warning to leave them alone. . . . Only, it says that once you've started to pry, you find you just can't let it alone—not easily, anyway."

"Like it had captured you and was studying you," Wing said. "You know what those initials 'AA' stand for?"

Will nodded. "I think so. It's a very old book dealing with magic and spells and very strange lore. And it fits in with some pretty awful things that are supposed to have happened. . . . It ties in with that correspondence Dave had with—the man in Rhode Island. He's written some things as fiction but he knows a lot about this book and—that place. . . . I'd have to study the rest of the Latin a long time to get any more, though. This first was a little easy for me, but I could see from skimming over the next passage that it's beyond me. You have to know a fair amount of what is being talked about to make any sense of this sort of Latin."

"Then I guess Dave did get his foundation there," the major agreed. "Would have gone to Italy last year, if . . . " He was silent, and we didn't break the brown study into which he fell for a while. "You can borrow that notebook for as long as you need it," he said. "And if you want to look at the wall a bit more, that's all right with me, so long as you don't dig. Even that author says you shouldn't dig—I'm sure he's talking about the wall. Must be others like it—or there were others like it back whenever it was he wrote. Middle Ages, I guess."

"Older than that," Will said. "This book is a translation from the Arabic."

The major whistled. "Arabic, eh? That goes way back. Those old boys had one helluva civilization when we were still in a pretty barbaric state."

"There's one thing I'd like to try," Will said slowly. "I had another fraternity brother who lives around this area. He was an aviation enthusiast and had a plane of his own the last I heard from him. Taught me a little flying and parachute jumping. I'd like to see if I can come down behind the wall in a parachute."

"Now that would be interesting," allowed Thad Wing.

And the upshot of it all was that Will made a long distance call and managed to contact Frank Bentley. There seemed to be no end of new

things I was learning about my partner on this trip. It was not exactly news to me that Will was interested in flying and had done a little while he was knocking around after graduating from college. But he'd never mentioned parachute jumping. The plans were that I'd stay on with Wing while Will drove over to make arrangements with Frank; Will was going to try to come down behind the wall via parachute. Both Wing and the major were impressed, and I reaped some of the benefit of our advanced status; I was invited to join them fishing the next morning.

I had thought I knew a little about fishing. Wing and the major had a fine morning, and I suppose they chuckled for years afterward about my part of it. If you don't mind, we will shift scenes here and cut directly to that afternoon, when Wing, the major and I gathered in the meadow to await Will's arrival with Frank Bentley in Bentley's autogyro. He'd phoned to let us know when they'd arrive, and what he wanted me to do.

Will looked a little pale when he climbed out, but recovered enough to introduce Frank around. We learned the reason for his distress quickly enough. The wall could not be seen from the plane at all. Looking down, they saw a symmetrical layout of wooded hill, large meadow flat enough for a plane to land, and the road.

"It's about as easy to explain as what we've come up against so far," Will said. "And you saw how low we were when we were going right over the road. I took some pictures. . . . Did you bring the flags, Clyde?"

I nodded, and set them up in a twenty foot triangle. "As soon as you spot them with the binoculars, you get into position and jump," I told him. "We'll all see whether or not you come down behind the wall."

Thad Wing knocked out his pipe and spat, and the major kept a poker face, but it was pretty clear to me what they were both thinking. I was tempted to ask them if anyone had tried this before, but I just couldn't. If it had been tried before and hadn't worked, I didn't want to know that yet. The one thing I could be sure of was that if it had been tried before, the failure had been no more harmful than trying to walk around the wall or climb over it. We took some pictures of the wall from where we stood.

We watched the autogyro ease up gradually. There was no wind, so it shouldn't be too difficult, Will had said, to make the jump right. And if he failed the first time, he could try again.

We all had glasses, and the three of us fixed them on Frank's plane.

There! There went Will, twisting and tumbling; he was a black speck for a moment, then the white of the parachute mushroomed out and the abruptness of the fall stopped.

It seemed agonizingly slow, but after a while it was clear to us that he would land behind the wall. There could be no doubt about it. And if he couldn't get over it to us, then Frank could make a landing on the same side and fly him out. I cut loose with a cheer when I saw that drifting shape float down on the other side of Settler's wall, out of sight; but I cheered alone. Wing and the major had interested expressions on their faces; they waited, for a moment or two, then, as if on command, turned around.

So did I. And I saw why I had cheered alone. Will Richards, parachute and all, was behind us.

The major stood there like a statue for a moment, and then he said one word: "Dynamite." He said it without raising his voice, or using any particular inflection unlike his usual way of talking. But I knew at that moment that he really did have feelings about the wall after all. He hated it.

Frank Bentley was upset. He, too, was sure that Will had come down on the other side, and this was a lot different from just hearing a fantastic story. I was glad that I hadn't asked my question earlier. When Bentley joined us, and Will had struggled out of the harness, the parachute folded, etc., I put it to the major. He nodded. "He's the third," he said. "A friend of Dave's tried twice. No one's been able to get to the other side of that wall at all."

"So you're going to blow it up?" asked Bentley.

Thad Wing shook his head. "Nope, just try to blow a hole *through* it."

It was clear that Wing and the major knew a great deal more about the wall than they had let on. My feeling was that the attempt would show that you couldn't penetrate the surface at all, but the drill that I held seemed to go in easily enough when Bentley struck it with the hammer. Wing prepared the dynamite and set the fuses, three sticks in holes as close together as feasible. The major lit the fuses then we let him lead us to the proper distance. I felt a momentary sense of relief that working with dynamite was not among Will's irritating list of accomplishments and experiences.

The explosion sounded impressive to me, but Thad Wing shook his head. "Not quite right. Didn't sound quite right when the drills were going in, either."

Well, it looked promising enough. There was a good size section blown out, leaving a deep cavity. Fragments of stone—substance—were on all sides; we dragged out several large chunks and threw them aside. The wall now had a definite mark upon it, a hole of particularly deep-looking darkness. But no daylight. We had knocked a hole into the wall, but not through it. Will walked over to the autogryo and came back with a flashlight which he poked into the cavity.

"It goes down," he said. "It goes way down."

We got some rope and Will tied it around his waist, as if he were going to be let down into a well. Somehow, the idea seemed acceptable, just as we found ourselves accepting everything about Settler's wall, bit by bit, even while something inside us was screaming. Bentley and I held on to the rope; three tugs would be the signal to haul Will back.

We saw him go in, saw the momentary gleam of the flashlight, and watched the rope play out. It seemed like hours, but could not have been more than a few minutes at the most, when the tugs came. We all started pulling until Will came into sight. He was very pale, but managed to keep a poker face to match Settler's. "There's no way through the wall, either, Major."

None of the photographs taken from the plane came out, and we never so much as thought of taking some fragments with us.

4

THE NEXT DAY, we said goodbye to Major Settler and Thad Wing, with thanks for their hospitality and co-operation, and Will promised to return the notebooks. He spoke a little more quietly than before, but apparently he had slept all right. I hadn't; I'm not used to sleeping with a light on. Taking it all in all, I wonder if he hasn't recovered better than I have. It is true that he always carries a flashlight with him, won't go into a dark room without turning it on first, but won't switch it off until another light is on, and won't turn off the last light in a room at night under any circumstances. He nearly died a year or so later when there was a power failure, no electricity for nearly forty-eight hours, and we had to rely on candles and oil lamps. The batteries in his flashlight ran out, and I'll never forget the gasp he gave as he saw the light give its warning flicker. He pressed it into my hands, whispered, "Clyde, turn it off and light the lamp," then clapped both hands to his eyes and faced the wall.

Now and then he talks in his sleep about a hole which keeps going

down and down, and he's dropped his flashlight, which goes out. But the light from flashlight isn't off. It's still there, drifting away gradually like smoke. He has this dream every so often, and apparently it is always the same, but he never talks about it when he wakes up. I've never mentioned it to him, and I don't want to ask him any questions. I've tried not to write this story for thirty years . . .

He worked on Dave Hill's notebooks that autumn, but wouldn't discuss them—not yet, was the way he put it. He was waiting for something. He wouldn't tell me what it was. I tried to decipher some of the Latin quotations, but could make nothing of them except that there was something about magic and something about monsters—or maybe it was something monstrous. We had photographs of the wall, showing how it looked before and after the dynamite experiment. And a few months later, Will returned the notebooks to Major Settler with a letter of thanks, saying that they contained a great deal of ancient lore, valuable to a scholar, and very likely of use to someone who wanted to research old Latin manuscripts—especially ones in corrupt Latin—but nothing further that really related to the wall. I didn't accuse him of lying, but I can't help but feel that he was.

5

Early in March 1936, a letter came from Thad Wing, with a photograph enclosed. Wing had not only included his car, with the 1936 license plates clearly visible, but had followed our lead with the photographs we took before dynamiting; we had written our names and the dates on the back. The major and a couple of others endorsed the picture he sent.

It showed the wall, and there were still traces of the hole in it. Traces. Most of it was filled in. And the accompanying letter avowed that neither Major Settler, Wing himself, or anyone else had made any moves toward repairing the wall. All the fragments disappeared.

You can see now why I've been reluctant to tell this story, as interesting as some of the aspects of it are. Settler's wall was not of stone, or any other substance we're familiar with, though it seemed to be more nearly like stone than anything else. And there was some sort of phenomenon connected with it, as a result of which one could neither go around it or over it, nor through it—in fact, it seemed that there just wasn't

any other side at all. I've heard of mobius strips, of course, but it couldn't have been a mobius strip.

Then came the hurricane of 1938. I was in Brooklyn that night and, oddly enough, there was no indication where I was that the storm was anything really unusual. The wind was considerable, and there was a lot of rain. But it wasn't until the next day that I found out how serious it had been.

When I got back to work, a week or so later, Will was away, and a letter from 'Maine arrived before he returned. I didn't open it, but I felt sure that there was news of the wall in it.

There was. The letter included another authenticated photograph of a long trench beside the road we had traveled. The wall was gone. Some people in the area, Thad Wing wrote, believed there had been a slight earthquake, but seismologists did not agree with them.

That is the end of my story, except for what Will said when he looked at the photograph.

"Of course," he whispered, "of course. It swam away."

The Reckoning

There was a little contention between the two stories which finished in the upper third, and it was back and forth between the two stories which wound up in the bottom third divisions, but the two stories in the middle stayed put almost from the start. The cover drew no dislike, but about a fourth of the balloteers ignored it, which says something.

Here's how the contents of issue #8 (Spring 1968) came out in your consensus: (1) *The Return of the Sorcerer*, Clark Ashton Smith; (2) *The White Lady of the Orphanage*, Seabury Quinn; (3) *The Three From The Tomb*, Edmond Hamilton; (4) *The Endocrine Monster*, R. Anthony; (5) *The Gray People*, John Campbell Haywood; (6) *And Then No More . . .*, Jay Tyler. Only the Anthony story failed to draw extreme reactions, one way or the other.

Inquisitions

OPERATION: PHANTASY

The Best From *The Phantagraph*,
Edited by Donald A. Wollheim

Produced and Distributed by
Donald M. Grant, Publisher, West
Kingston, Rhode Island, 02982;
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heim; 59pp; \$4.00.

The only comment I can make on this attractive and well made little volume will be non-objective, meaning that it is entirely subjective. I first met Don Wollheim in 1936, the year that *The Phantagraph* became a real personal amateur publication, well printed, and showing the essence of Wollheim's editorial abilities and taste. My copies have long since vanished, so that I cannot judge how closely these selections would correspond to my own notions of "the best", but they are certainly good selections; and while I'm not entirely sure that Wollheim's little tale *The Booklings* is the best he ever wrote (any more than the selections by Cyril Kornbluth are his best) this is a delightful story, and should have been in general circulation long before now.

It was something of a shock to see a couple of my own attempts at verse which I'd long forgotten. The circumstances are interesting in that *Quarry* is one of three experiments based upon a misconception of surrealist poetry obtained from Mary Byers (later

Mary Kornbluth). That is, I entirely misinterpreted her explanation; whether her conception was correct, I have no idea. In fact, I rather suspect that Wollheim's and Pohl's ventures are no closer to what surrealist poetry really was—but suspect still more strongly that it doesn't matter! All (I maintain without any pretense of modesty) have their own entertainment value, and that is enough.

And this applies to the whole volume, which has nostalgic value for the oldtimer and perhaps more than cursory interest for today's fan who may be curious about the doings of now gray-bearded or otherwise visibly aging veteran science fictionists. For the oldtimers, then, I do not hesitate to state my opinion that this is worth buying; for the newcomers—well, I've seen far less worth-while material going for more. RAWL

THE AMATEUR PRESS

Fan magazines which are sent to me, and which I find interesting and well-made enough to read a substantial fraction of the contents, will be discussed here from time to time.

I cannot promise prompt reviews

LIGHTHOUSE is edited and published by Terry Carr, 35 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201. It appears in the mailings of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association

but is available outside that limited membership organization at 50c a copy.

The most recent issue of the magazine that I have seen is dated August 1967 and contains 100 neatly mimeographed pages, reasonably free of typographical errors, with a large splattering of fair to good artwork, and a wide range of material. There is Samuel R. Delany's very well written travel journal (he spent a year abroad recently); Fritz Leiber's most interesting "The Anima Archetype in Science Fantasy"; Daman Knight's provocative speech "Project Boskone"; Pat Lupoff's fascinating study of old Western Dime Novels; Richard Lupoff's delving into the technical aspects of science-fiction speculation in novels written prior to 1926; as well as enjoyable personal commentary by Terry Carr, Carol Carr, and various readers who sent in letters to the letter department.

HABAKKUK is published by Bill Donaho, PO Box 1284, Berkeley, California, 94701. Like the publication above, it is produced for FAPA, but copies are available to others "for trade, letter of comment, etc."

I do not see any specific price, but imagine that .50c would be appropriate for a sample copy.

Having mislaid the most recent copies while moving, I can only report from the copy I had at the office (dated February 1967), that this is a very readable though more personal publication than *Lighthouse*, and is more for the "in" reader. (However, no reader is "in" at the beginning, anyhow.) The February issue ran to 70 pages, but I seem to recall thicker ones later. If you find *Lighthouse* whetting your appetite for more, you might try *Habbakuk*, since these publications do not appear with utter regularity.

Remembering the hours I spent to the point of exhaustion back in my own fan publishing days with stenciling, highly temperamental hand mimeographs, slipsheeting, and collating only a fraction of pages per issue that both the above gentlemen present, I can only gape in admiration. Where do they find time and energy for anything else? Yet, clearly they do, for this is a labor of love, and a complete sell-out of an issue would not result in any profit, I am sure.

The Isle Of Missing Ships

by Seabury Quinn

(author of *The Tenants of Broussac*, *The White Lady of the Orphanage*, etc.)

THE MEVROUW, SUMATRA-BOUND out of Amsterdam, had dropped the low Holland coast an hour behind that day in 1925, when I recognized a familiar figure among the miscellany of Dutch colonials. The little man with the erect, military carriage, trimly waxed mustache and direct, challenging blue eyes was as conspicuous amid the throng of over-fleshed planters, traders and petty administrators as a fleur-de-lis growing in the midst of a cabbage patch.

"For the Lord's sake, de Grandin! What are you doing here?" I demanded, seizing him by the hand. "I thought you'd gone back to your microscopes and test tubes when you cleared up the the Broussac mystery."

He grinned at me like a blond brother of Mephistopheles as he linked his arm in mine and caught step with me. "*Eh bien*," he agreed with a nod, "so did I; but those inconsiderate Messieurs Lloyd would not

De Grandin and Trowbridge had two alternatives: accept a degrading position in Goonong Besar's harem, or feed his hungry pet.

have it so. They must needs send me an urgent message to investigate a suspicion they have at the other end of the earth.

"I did not desire to go. The summer is come and the blackbirds are singing in the trees at St. Cloud. Also, I have much work to do; but they tell me: 'You shall name your own price and no questions shall be asked,' and, *hélas*, the franc is very low on the exchange these days.

"I tell them, 'Ten pounds sterling for each day of my travels and all expenses.' They agree. *Voilà*. I am here."

I looked at him in amazement. "Lloyds? Ten pounds sterling a day?" I echoed. "What in the world—?"

"*La, la!*" he exclaimed. "It is a long story, Friend Trowbridge, and most like a foolish one in the bargain, but, at any rate, the English money is sound. Listen"—he sank his voice to a confidential whisper,— "you know those Messieurs Lloyd, *hein?* They will insure against anything from the result of one of your American political elections to the loss of a ship in the sea. That last business of theirs is also my business, for the time.

"Of late the English insurers have had many claims to pay—claims on ships which should have been good risks. There was the Dutch Indianman *Van Dam*, a sound little iron ship of twelve thousand tons displacement. She sail out of Rotterdam for Sumatra, and start home heavily-laden with spices and silks, also with a king's ransom in pearls safely locked in her strong box. Where is she now?" He spread his hands and shrugged expressively. "No one knows. She was never heard of more, and the Lloyds had to make good her value to her owners.

"There was the French steamer *l'Orient*, also dissolved into air, and the British merchantman *Nightingale*, and six other sound ships gone—all gone, with none to say whither, and the estimable Messieurs Lloyd to pay insurance. All within one single year. *Pardieu*, it is too much! The English company pays its losses like a true sportsman, but it also begins to sniff the aroma of the dead fish. They would have me, Jules de Grandin, investigate this business of the monkey and tell them where the missing ships are gone.

"It may be for a year that I search; it may be for only a month, or, perhaps, I spend the time till my hair is as bald as yours, Friend Trowbridge, before I can report. No matter; I receive my ten pounds each day and all incidental expenses. Say now, are not those Messieurs Lloyd gambling more recklessly this time than ever before in their long career?"

"I think they are," I agreed.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING CASES

For some time, we have been hearing rumors, from the plausible to the absurd (one correspondent mentions a figure of 200) about unpublished manuscripts of Jules de Grandin stories by Seabury Quinn (1889—). I wrote to Mr. Quinn recently, mentioning this, and his reply was that the correct figure of such unpublished manuscripts was no more or less than 0. *WEIRD TALES* published every such manuscript he sent them; he sent on every one he wrote, and Farnsworth Wright couldn't get enough of them. How, then, do we account for the rumors?

A clue can be found in the introduction, "By Way of Explanation", which appears in the Mycroft & Moran edition of *The Phantom Fighter*, (available from Arkham House at \$5.00). Mr. Quinn writes: "... the fact is that Jules de Grandin is a sort of literary combination of Topsy and Minerva, that is, he just growed—but growed full-panoplied, and did not have to be 'evolved'.

"One evening in the spring of 1925 I was in that state that every writer knows and dreads; a story was due my publisher, and there didn't seem to be a plot in the world. Accordingly, with nothing particular in mind, I picked up my pen and—literally making it up as I went along—wrote the first story that appears in this book. (*The Terror on the Links*, originally published as *The Horror on the Links*. RAWL)

"As with *Terror on the Links*, so with all the other adventures of de Grandin. I have never had a definite plot in mind when commencing one of his memoirs, and it is seldom that I have so much as a single well defined incident of the proposed story thought out in advance. From first to last Jules

"But," he replied with one of his elfish grins, "remember, Trowbridge, my friend, those Messieurs Lloyd were never known to lose money permanently on any transaction. *Morbleu!* Jules de Grandin, as the Americans say, you entertain the hatred for yourself!"

The *Mevrouw* churned and wallowed her broadbeamed way through the cool European ocean, into the summer seas, finally out upon the tropical waters of Polynesia. For five nights the smalt-blue heavens were ablaze with stars; on the sixth evening the air thickened at sunset. By 10 o'clock the ship might have been draped in a pall of black velvet as a teapot is swathed in a cozy, so impenetrable was the darkness. Objects a dozen feet from the porthole lights were all but indistinguishable, at twenty feet they were invisible, and, save for the occasional phosphorescent glow of some tumbling sea denizen, the ocean itself was only an undefined part of the surrounding blackness.

de Grandin has seemed to say, 'Friend Quinn, *je suis present. En avant, write me!*' Perhaps there is something to the Socratic theory of the daemon within, after all.

"The petit Jules is now quite an old gentleman. Numerically his adventures total almost 300, chronologically they span a quarter of a century . . ."

In his correspondence, Mr. Quinn consistently speaks of de Grandin and Trowbridge as if they were real persons; and here we have a clue to the actual source of the stories—one which will be entirely comprehensible to the student of psychic phenomena and the occult: De Grandin and Trowbridge are indeed, real persons, but they do not live in our plane; they inhabit a parallel world which is almost exactly similar to our own, except for certain details. Mr. Quinn, taking up his pen that evening in 1925, contacted the mind of Samuel J. Trowbridge, M. D. and found himself caught up in the phenomenon known as automatic writing. So where Arthur Conan Doyle, M.D. was the agent for a fellow physician who did not want to publish under his own name (although, you will remember that *A Study in Scarlet* is clearly identified as taken from Dr. Watson's reminiscences), Mr. Seabury Quinn was, in effect, the medium.

Did you think we had forgotten about the 200 missing manuscripts? By no means. Elementary! At one time or another, Dr. Trowbridge mentioned that de Grandin's adventures total nearly three hundred; but of these, only some 90 odd were transmitted. When not acting as Dr. Trowbridge's amanuensis, Mr. Quinn had stories of his own to write. Meanwhile, he has assured us; the friends of Drs. de Grandin and Trowbridge will be glad to learn that they are still alive and well.

"Eh, but I do not like this," de Grandin muttered as he lighted a rank Sumatra cigar from the ship steward's store and puffed vigorously to set the fire going: "this darkness, it is a time for evil doings, Friend Trowbridge."

He turned to a ship's officer who strode past us toward the bridge. "Is it that we shall have a storm, *Monsieur*?" he asked. "Does the darkness portend a typhoon?"

"No," returned the Dutchman. "Id iss folcanic dust. Some of dose folcano mountains are in eruption again and scatter steam and ash over a hundred miles. Tomorrow, perhaps, or de nex' day, ve are out of id an' into de zunzhine again."

"Ah," de Grandin bowed acknowledgment of the information, "and does this volcanic darkness frequently come at this latitude and longitude. *Monsieur*."

"*Ja*," the other answered, "dese vaters are almost always cofered; de chimneys of hell poke up through de ocean hereabouts, *Mijnheer*."

"Cordieu!" de Grandin swore softly to himself. "I think he has spoken truth, Friend Trowbridge. Now if—*Grand Dieu*, see! What is that?"

Some distance off our port bow a brand of yellow fire burned a parabola against the black sky, burst into a shower of sparks high above the horizon and flung a constellation of colored fireballs into the air. A second flame followed the first, and a third winged upward in the wake of the second. "Rockets," de Grandin announced. "A ship is in distress over there, it would seem."

Bells clanged and jangled as the engine room telegraph sent orders from the bridge; there was a clanking of machinery as the screws churned in opposite directions and the steering mechanism brought the ship's head about toward the distress signals.

"I think we had best be prepared, my friend," de Grandin whispered as he reached upward to the rack above us and detached two kapok swimming jackets from their straps. "Come, slip this over your shoulders, and if you have anything in your cabin you would care to save, get it at once," he advised.

"You're crazy, man," I protested, pushing the life preserver away. "We aren't in any danger. Those lights were at least five miles away, and even if that other ship is fast on a reef our skipper would hear the breakers long before we were near enough to run aground."

"*Vom d'un nom!*" the little Frenchman swore in vexation. "Friend Trowbridge, you are one great zany. Have you no eyes in that so empty head of yours? Did you not observe how those rockets went up?"

"How they went up?" I repeated. "Of course I did; they were fired from the deck—perhaps the bridge—of some ship about five miles away."

"So?" he replied in a sarcastic whisper. "Five miles, you say? And you, a physician, do not know that the human eye sees only about five miles over a plane surface? How, then, if the distressed ship is five miles distant, could those flares have appeared to rise from a *greater height than our own deck*? Had they really a masthead, at that distance—they should have appeared to rise across the horizon. As it was, they first became visible at a considerable height."

"Nonsense," I rejoined; "whoever would be setting off rockets in mid-air in this part of the world?"

"Who, indeed?" he answered, gently forcing the swimming coat on me. "That question, *mon ami*, is precisely what those Messieurs Lloyd are paying me ten pounds a day to answer. Hark!"

Distinctly, directly in our path, sounded the muttering roar of waves breaking against rocks.

Clang! The ship's telegraph shrieked the order to reverse, to put about, to the engine room from the bridge. Wheels and chains rattled, voices shouted hoarse orders through the dark, and the ship shivered from stem to stern as the engine struggled hysterically to break our course toward destruction.

Too late! Like a toy boat caught in a sudden wind squall, we lunged forward, gathering speed with each foot we traveled. There was a rending crash like all the crockery in the world being smashed at once, de Grandin and I fell headlong to the deck and shot along the smooth boards like a couple of ball players sliding for second base, and the stout little *Mevrouw* listed suddenly to port, sending us banging against the deck rail.

"Quick, quick, my friend!" de Grandin shouted. "Over the side and swim for it. I may be wrong, *prie-Dieu* I am, but I fear there will be devil's work here anon. Come!" He lifted himself to his feet, balanced on the rail a moment, then slipped into the purple water that swirled past the doomed ship's side a scant seven feet below us.

I followed, striking out easily toward the quiet water ahead, the kapok jacket keeping me afloat and the rushing water carrying me forward rapidly.

"By George, old fellow, you've been right this far," I congratulated my companion, but he shut me off with a sharp hiss.

"Still, you fool," he admonished savagely. "Keep your silly tongue quiet and kick with your feet. Kick, kick, I tell you! Make as great commotion in the water as possible—*nom de Dieu!* We are lost!"

Faintly luminous with the phosphorescence of tropical sea water, something seeming as large as a submarine boat shot upward from the depths below, headed as straight for my flailing legs as a sharpshooter's bullet for its target.

De Grandin grasped my shoulder and heaved me over in a clumsy back somersault, and at the same time thrust himself as deeply into the water as his swimming coat would permit. For a moment his fiery silhouette mingled with that of the great fish and he seemed striving to embrace the monster, then the larger form sank slowly away, while the little Frenchman rose puffing to the surface.

"*Mordieu!*" he commented, blowing the water from his mouth; "that was a near escape, my friend. One little second more and he would have had your leg in his belly. Lucky for us. I knew the pearl divers' trick

of slitting those fellows' gills with a knife, and luckier still I thought to bring along a knife to slit him with."

"What was it?" I asked, still bewildered by the performance I had just witnessed. "It looked big enough to be a whale."

He shook his head to clear the water from his eyes as he replied: "It was our friend, *Monsieur le Requin*—the shark. He is always hungry, that one, and such morsels as you would be a choice titbit for his table, my friend."

"A shark!" I answered incredulously. "But it couldn't have been a shark, de Grandin, they have to turn on their backs to bite, and that thing came straight at me."

"Ah, bah!" he shot back disgustedly. "What old wives tale is that you quote? *Le requin* is no more compelled to take his food upside down than you are. I tell you, he would have swallowed your leg up to the elbow if I had not cut his sinful gizzard in two!"

"Good Lord!" I began splashing furiously. "Then we're apt to be devoured any moment!"

"Possibly," he returned calmly, "but not probably. If land is not too far away that fellow's brethren will be too busy eating him to pay attention to such small fry as us. *Grace a Dieu*. I think I feel the good land beneath our feet even now."

It was true. We were standing armpit-deep on a sloping, sandy beach with the long, gentle swell of the ocean kindly pushing us toward the shore. A dozen steps and we were safely beyond the tide-line, lying face down upon the warm sands and gulping down great mouthfuls of the heavy, sea-scented air. What de Grandin did there in the dark I do not know, but for my part I offered up such unspoken prayers of devout thanksgiving as I had never breathed before.

My devotions were cut short by a sputtering mixture of French profanity.

"What's up?" I demanded, then fell silent as de Grandin's hand closed on my wrist like a tightened tourniquet.

"Hark, my friend," he commanded. "Look across the water to the ship we left and say whether or no I was wise when I brought us away."

Out across the quiet lagoon inside the reef the form of the stranded *Mevrouw* loomed a half shade darker than the night, her lights, still burning, casting a fitful glow upon the crashing water at the reef and the quiet water beyond. Two, three, four, half a dozen shades gathered alongside her; dark figures, like ants swarming over the carcass of a dead rat, appeared against her lights a moment, and the stabbing flame

of a pistol was followed a moment later by the reports of the shots wafted to us across the lagoon. Shouts, cries of terror, scream of women in abject fright followed one another in quick succession for a time, then silence, more ominous than any noise, settled over the water.

Half an hour, perhaps, de Grandin and I stood tense-muscle on the beach, staring toward the ship, waiting expectantly for some sign of renewed life. One by one her porthole lights blinked out; at last she lay in utter darkness.

"It is best we seek shelter in the bush, my friend," de Grandin announced matter-of-factly. "The farther out of sight we get the better will be our health."

"What in heaven's name does it all mean?" I demanded as I turned to follow him.

"Mean?" he echoed impatiently. "It means we have stumbled on as fine a nest of pirates as ever cheated the yardarm. When we reached this island, Friend Trowbridge, I fear we did but step from the soup kettle into the flame. *Mille tonnerres*, what a fool you are, Jules de Grandin! You should have demanded fifty pounds sterling a day from those Messieurs Lloyd! Come, Friend Trowbridge, let us seek shelter. Right away, at once, immediately."

2

THE SLOPING BEACH GAVE WAY to a line of boulders a hundred yards inland, and these, in turn marked the beginning of a steady rise in the land, its lower portion overgrown with bushes, loftier growth supplanting the underbrush as we stumbled upward over the rocks.

When we had traversed several hundred rods and knocked nearly all the skin from our legs against unexpectedly projecting stones, de Grandin called a halt in the midst of a copse of wide-leaved trees. "We may as well rest here as elsewhere," he suggested philosophically. "The pack will scarcely hunt again tonight."

I was too sleepy and exhausted to ask what he meant. The last hour's events had been as full of surprises to me as a traveling carnival is for a farmhand.

It might have been half an hour later, or only five minutes, judging by my feelings, that I was roused by the roar of a muffled explosion, followed at short intervals by two more detonations. "*Mordieu!*" I heard de Grandin exclaim. "Up, Friend Trowbridge. Rise and see!"

He shook me roughly by the shoulder, and half dragged me to an opening in the trees. Out across the lagoon I saw the hulk of the *Mevrouw* falling apart and sliding into the water like a mud bank attacked by a summer flood, and round her the green waters boiled and seethed as though the entire reef had suddenly gone white hot. Across the lagoon, wave after swelling wave raced and tumbled, beating on the glittering sands of the beach in a furious surf.

"Why—" I began, but he answered my question before I could form it.

"Dynamite!" he exclaimed. "Last night, or early this morning, they looted her, now they dismantle the remains with high explosives; it would not do to let her stand there as a sign-post of warning for other craft. *Pardieu!* They have system, these ones. Captain Kidd and Blackbeard, they were but freshmen in crime's college, Friend Trowbridge. We deal with postgraduates here. Ah"—his small, womanishly slender hand caught me by the arm—"observe, if you please; what is that on the sands below?"

Following his pointing finger with my eyes, I made out, beyond a jutting ledge of rocks, the rising spiral of a column of wood smoke. "Why," I exclaimed delightedly, "some of the people from the ship escaped, after all! They got to shore and built a fire. Come on, let's join them. Hello, down here; hello, hello! You . . ."

"Fool!" he cried in a suppressed shout, clapping his hand over my mouth. "Would you ruin us altogether, completely, entirely? *Le bon Dieu* grant your ass's bray was not heard, or, if heard, was disregarded!"

"But," I protested, "those people probably have food, de Grandin, and we haven't a single thing to eat. We ought to join them and plan our escape."

He looked at me as a school teacher might regard an unusually backward pupil. "They have food, no doubt," he admitted, "but what sort of food, can you answer me that? Suppose—*nom d'un moineau, regardez vous!*"

As if in answer to my hail, a pair of the most villainous-looking Papuans I had ever beheld came walking around the rocky screen beyond which the smoke rose, looked undecidedly toward the heights where we hid, then turned back whence they had come. A moment later they reappeared, each carrying a broad-bladed spear, and began climbing over the rocks in our direction.



"Shall we go to meet them?" I asked dubiously. Those spears looked none too reassuring to me.

"*Mais non!*" de Grandin answered decidedly. "They may be friendly; but I distrust everything on this accursed island. We would better seek shelter and observe."

"But they might give us something to eat," I urged. "The whole world is petty well civilized now, it isn't as if we were back in Captain Cook's day."

"Nevertheless," he returned as he wriggled under a clump of bushes, "we shall watch first and ask questions later."

I crawled beside him and squatted, awaiting the savages' approach.

But I had forgotten that men who live in primitive surroundings have talents unknown to their civilized brethren. While they were still far enough away to make it impossible for us to hear the words they exchanged as they walked, the two Papuans halted, looked speculatively at the copse where we hid, and raised their spears menacingly.

"*Ciel!*" de Grandin muttered. "We are discovered." He seized the stalk of one of the sheltering plants and shook it gently.

The response was instant. A spear whizzed past my ear, missing my head by an uncomfortably small fraction of an inch, and the savages

began clambering rapidly toward us, one with his spear poised for a throw, the other drawing a murderous knife from the girdle which constituted his sole article of clothing.

"*Parbleu!*" de Grandin whispered fiercely. "Play dead, my friend. Fall out from the bush and lie as though his spear had killed you." He gave me a sudden push which sent me reeling into the open.

I fell flat to the ground, acting the part of a dead man as realistically as possible and hoping desperately that the savages would not decide to throw a second spear to make sure of their kill.

Though my eyes were closed, I could feel them standing over me, and a queer, cold feeling tingled between my shoulder blades, where I momentarily expected a knife thrust.

Half opening one eye, I saw the brown, naked shins of one of the Papuans beside my head, and was wondering whether I could seize him by the ankles and drag him down before he could stab me, when the legs beside my face suddenly swayed drunkenly, like tree trunks in a storm, and a heavy weight fell crashing on my back.

Startled out of my sham death by the blow, I raised myself in time to see de Grandin in a death grapple with one of the savages. The other one lay across me, the spear he had flung at us a few minutes before protruding from his back directly beneath his left shoulder blade.

"*À moi, Friend Trowbridge!*" the little Frenchman called. "Quick, or we are lost."

I tumbled the dead Papuan unceremoniously to the ground and grappled with de Grandin's antagonist just as he was about to strike his dirk into my companion's side.

"*Bien, très bien!*" the Frenchman panted as he thrust his knife forward, sinking the blade hilt-deep into the savage's left armpit. "Very good, indeed, Friend Trowbridge. I have not hurled the javelin since I was a boy at school, and I strongly misdoubted my ability to kill the one with a single throw from my ambush, but, happily, my hand has not lost its cunning. *Voilà*, we have a perfect score to our credit! Come, let us bury them."

"But was it necessary to kill the poor fellows?" I asked as I helped him scrape a grave with one of his victims' knives. "Mightn't we have made them understand we meant them no harm?"

"Friend Trowbridge," he answered between puffs of exertion as he dragged one of the naked bodies into the shallow trench we had dug, "never, I fear me, will you learn the sense of the goose. With fellows

such as these, even as with the shark last night, we take necessary steps for our own protection first.

"This interment which we make now, think you it is for tenderness of these *canaille*? *Ah, non*. We bury them that their friends find them not if they come searching, and that the buzzards come not flapping this way to warn the others of what we have done. Good, they are buried. Take up that one's spear and come with me. I would investigate that fire which they have made."

We approached the heights overlooking the fire cautiously, taking care to remain unseen by any possible scout sent out by the main party of natives. It was more than an hour before we maneuvered to a safe observation post. As we crawled over the last ridge of rock obstructing our view I went deathly sick at my stomach and would have fallen down the steep hill, had not de Grandin thrown his arm about me.

Squatting around a blazing bonfire in a circle, like wolves about the stag they have run to earth, were perhaps two dozen naked savages, and, bound upright to a stake fixed in the sand, was a white man, lolling forward against the restraining cords with a horrible limpness. Before him stood two burly Papuans, the war clubs in their hands, red as blood at the tips, telling the devil's work they had just completed. It *was* blood on the clubs. The brown fiends had beaten their helpless captive's head in, and even now one of them was cutting the cords that held his body to the stake.

But beyond the dead man was a second stake, and, as I looked at this, every drop of blood in my body seemed turned to liquid fire, for, lashed to it, mercifully unconscious, but still alive, was a white woman whom I recognized as the wife of a Dutch planter going out from Holland to join her husband in Sumatra.

"Good God, man!" I cried. "That's a woman; a white woman. We can't let those devils kill *her*!"

"Softly, my friend," de Grandin cautioned, pressing me back, for I would have risen and charged pellmell down the hill. "We are two, they are more than a score; what would it avail us, or that poor woman, were we to rush down and be killed?"

I turned on him in amazed fury. "You call yourself a Frenchman," I taunted, "yet you haven't chivalry enough to attempt a rescue? A fine Frenchman you are!"

"Chivalry is well—in its place," he admitted, "but no Frenchman is so foolish as to spend his life where there is nothing to be bought with

it. Would it help her if we, too, were destroyed, or, which is worse, captured and eaten also? Do we, as physicians, seek to throw away our lives when we find a patient hopelessly sick with phthisis? But no, we live that we may fight the disease in others—that we may destroy the germs of the malady. So let it be in this case. Save that poor one we can not; but take vengeance on her slayers we can and will. I, Jules de Grandin, swear it. Ha, she has it!"

Even as he spoke one of the cannibal butchers struck the unconscious woman over the head with his club. A stain of red appeared against the pale yellow of her hair, and the poor creature shuddered convulsively, then hung passive and flaccid against her bonds once more.

"*Par le sang du diable*," de Grandin gritted between his teeth, "if it so be that the good God lets me live, I swear to make those *sales bouchers* die one hundred deaths apiece for every hair in that so pitiful woman's head!"

He turned away from the horrid sight below us and began to ascend the hill. "Come away, Friend Trowbridge," he urged. "It is not good that we should look upon a woman's body served as meat. *Pardieu*, almost I wish I had followed your so crazy advice and attempted a rescue; we should have killed some of them so! No matter, as it is, we shall kill all of them, or may those Messieurs Lloyd pay me not one penny."

3

FEELING SECURE AGAINST DISCOVERY by the savages, as they were too engrossed in their orgy to look for other victims, we made our way to the peak which towered like a truncated cone at the center of the island.

From our station at the summit we could see the ocean in all directions and get an accurate idea of our surroundings. Apparently, the islet was the merest point of land on the face of the sea—probably only the apex of a submarine volcano. It was roughly oval in shape, extending for a possible five miles in length by two-and-a-quarter miles at its greatest width, and rising out of the ocean with a mountainous steepness, the widest part of the beach at the water-line being not more than three or four hundred feet. On every side, and often in series of three or four, extended reefs and points of rock (no doubt the lesser peaks of the mountain whose unsubmerged top constituted the island) so that no craft larger than a whaleboat could hope to come within half a mile of the

land without having its bottom torn out by the hidden or semi-submerged crags.

"*Nom d'un petit bonhomme!*" de Grandin commented. "This is an ideal place for its purpose, *c'est certain*. Ah, see!"—he drew me to a ridge of rock which ran like a rampart across the well-defined path by which we had ascended. Fastened to the stone by bolts were three sheet-iron troughs, each pointing skyward at an angle of some fifty degrees, and each much blackened by smoke stains. "Do you see?" he asked. "These are for firing rockets—observe the powder burns on them. And here"—his voice rose to an excited pitch and he fairly danced in eagerness—"see what is before us!"

Up the path, almost at the summit of the peak, and about twenty-five feet apart, stood two poles, each some twelve feet in height and fitted with a pulley and lanyard. As we neared them we saw that a lantern with a green globe rested at the base of the right-hand stake, while a red-globed lamp was secured to the rope of the left post. "Ah, clever, clever," de Grandin muttered, staring from one pole to the other. "Observe, my friend. At night the lamps can be lit and hoisted to the tops of these masts, then gently raised and lowered. Viewed at a distance against the black background of this mountain they will simulate a ship's lights to the life. The unfortunate mariner making for them will find his ship fast on these rocks while the lights are still a mile or more away, and—too well we know what happens then. Let us see what more there is, eh?"

Rounding the peak we found ourselves looking down upon the thatched beehive-roofs of a native village, before which a dozen long Papuan canoes were beached on the narrow strip of sand. "Ah," de Grandin inspected the cluster of huts, "it is there the butchers dwell, eh? That will be a good spot for us to avoid, my friend. Now to find the residence of what you Americans call the master mind. Do you see aught resembling a European dwelling, Friend Trowbridge?"

I searched the greenery below us, but nowhere could I descry a roof. "No," I answered after a second inspection, "there's nothing like a white man's house down there; but how do you know there's a white man here, anyway?"

"Ho, ho," he laughed, "how does the rat know the house contains a cat when he hears it mew? Think you those *sacre* eaters of men would know enough to set up such devil's machinery as this, or that they would take care to dynamite the wreck of a ship after looting it? No, no, my

friend, this is white man's work, and very bad work it is, too. Let us explore."

Treading warily, we descended the smooth path leading to the rocket-troughs, looking sharply from left to right in search of anything resembling a white man's house. Several hundred feet down the mountain the path forked abruptly, one branch leading toward the Papuan village, the other running to a narrow strip of beach bordering an inlet between two precipitous rock walls. I stared and stared again, hardly able to believe my eyes, for, drawn up on the sand and made fast by a rope to a ringbolt in the rock was a trim little motor-boat, flat-bottomed for navigating the rock-strewn waters in safety, broad-beamed for mastering the heavy ocean swells, and fitted with a comfortable, roofed-over cabin. Forward, on the little deck above her sharp clipper bow, was an efficient-looking Lewis gun mounted on a swivel, and a similar piece of ordnance poked its aggressive nose out of the engine cockpit at the stern.

"*Par la barbe d'un bouc vert,*" de Grandin swore delightedly, "but this is marvelous, this is magnificent, this is superb! Come, Friend Trowbridge, let us take advantage of this miracle; let us leave this hell-hole of an island right away, immediately, at once. *Par—*" The exclamation died, half uttered, and he stared past me with the expression of a superstitious man suddenly face-to-face with a sheeted specter.

3

"SURELY, GENTLEMEN," SAID A SUAVE VOICE behind me, "you are not going to leave without permitting me to offer you some slight hospitality? That would be ungenerous."

I turned as though stung by a wasp and looked into the smiling eyes of a dark-skinned young man, perhaps thirty years of age. From the top of his spotless *topi* to the tips of his highly polished tan riding boots he was a perfect model of the well-dressed European in the tropics. Not a stain of dust or travel showed on his spruce white drill jacket or modishly cut riding breeches, and as he waved his silver-mounted riding crop in greeting, I saw his slender hands were carefully manicured, the nails cut rather long and stained a vivid pink before being polished to the brightness of mother-of-pearl.

De Grandin laid his hand upon the knife at his belt, but before he could draw it, a couple of beetle-browed Malays in khaki jackets and *sarongs* stepped from the bushes bordering the path and leveled a pair of businesslike Mauser rifles at us. "I wouldn't," the young man warned

in a blase drawl, "I really wouldn't, if, I were you. These fellows are both dead shots, and could put enough lead in you to sink you forty fathoms down before you could get the knife out of its sheath, much less into me. Do you mind, really?" He held out his hand for the weapon. "Thank you, that is much better"—he tossed the blade into the water of the inlet with a careless gesture;—"really, you know, the most frightfully messy accidents are apt to happen with those things."

De Grandin and I eyed him in speechless amazement, but he continued as though our meeting were the most conventional thing imaginable.

"Mr. Trowbridge—pardon my assumption, but I heard your name called a moment ago—will you be good enough to favor me with an introduction to your friend?"

"I am Dr. Samuel Trowbridge, of Harrisonville, New Jersey," I replied, wondering, meanwhile, if I were in the midst of some crazy dream, "and this is Dr. Jules de Grandin, of Paris."

"So good of you," the other acknowledged with a smile. "I fear I must be less frank than you for the nonce and remain veiled in anonymity. However, one really must have some sort of designation, mustn't one? So suppose you know me for the present as Goonong Besar. Savage, unchristian-sounding sort of name, I'll admit, but more convenient than calling, 'hey, you!' or simply whistling when you wish to attract my attention. Eh, what? And now"—he made a slight bow—"if you will be so kind as to step into my humble burrow in the earth . . . Yes, that is it, the doorway right before you."

Still under the menacing aim of the Malays' rifles, de Grandin and I walked through the cleft in the rock, traversed a low, narrow passage, darker than a windowless cellar, made a sharp turn to the left, and halted abruptly, blinking our eyes in astonishment.

Before us, seeming to run into infinity, was a wide, long apartment paved with alternate squares of black and white marble, colonnaded down each side with double rows of white-marble pillars and topped with a vaulted ceiling of burnished copper plates. Down the center of the corridor, at intervals of about twenty feet, five silver oil lamps with globes of finely cut crystal hung from the polished ceiling, making the entire room almost as bright as equatorial noon.

"Not half bad, eh?" our host remarked as he viewed our astonishment with amusement. "This is only the vestibule, gentlemen; you really have no idea of the wonders of this house under the water. For instance, would either of you care to retrace your steps? See if you can find the door you came in."

We swung about, like soldiers at the command of execution, staring straight at the point where the entranceway should have been. A slab of marble, firm and solid as any composing the walls of the room, to all appearances, met our gaze; there was neither sign nor remote evidence of any door or doorway before us.

Goonong Besar chuckled delightedly and gave an order to one of his attendants in the harsh, guttural language of Malaya. "If you will look behind you, gentlemen," he resumed, again addressing us, "you will find another surprise."

We wheeled about and almost bumped into a pair of grinning Malay lads who stood at our elbows.

"These boys will show you to your rooms," Goonong Besar announced. "Kindly follow them. It will be useless to attempt conversation, for they understand no language but their native speech, and as for replying, unfortunately, they lack the benefits of a liberal education and can not write, while . . ." he shot a quick order to the youths, who immediately opened their mouths as though yawning. Both de Grandin and I gave vent to exclamations of horror. The boys' mouths gaped empty. Both had had their tongues cut off at the roots.

"You see," Goonong went on in the same musical, slightly bored voice, "these chaps can't be a bit of use to you as gossips, they really can't."

"I think I can furnish you with dinner clothes, Dr. De Grandin, but"—he smiled apologetically—"I'm afraid you, Dr. Trowbridge, are a little too—er—corpulent to be able to wear any garments made for me. So sorry! However, no doubt we can trick you out in a suit of whites. Captain Van Thun—er, that is, I'm sure you can be accommodated from our stores. Yes."

"Now, if you will follow the guides, please"—he broke off on a slightly interrogative note and bowed with gentle courtesy toward each of us in turn—"you will excuse me for a short time, I'm sure."

Before we could answer, he signaled his two attendants, and the three of them stepped behind one of the marble columns. We heard a subdued click, as of two pieces of stone coming lightly together.

"But, *Monsieur*, this is incredible, this is monstrous!" de Grandin began, striding forward. "You shall explain, I demand—*Cordieu*, he is gone!"

He was. As though the wall had faded before his approach, or his own body had dissolved into either, Goonong Besar had vanished. We were alone in the brilliantly-lighted corridor with our tongueless attendants.

Nodding and grinning, the lads signaled us to follow them down the room. One of them ran a few paces ahead and parted a pair of silken curtains, disclosing a narrow doorway through which only one could go at a time. Obeying the lad's gestures, I stepped through the opening, followed by de Grandin and our dumb guides.

The lad who had held aside the curtains for us ran ahead a few paces and gave a strange, eerie cry. We looked sharply at him, wondering what the utterance portended, and from behind us sounded the thud of stone on stone. Turning, we saw the second Malay grinning broadly at us from the place where the doorway had been. I say "had been" advisedly, for, where the narrow arched door had pierced the thick wall a moment before, was now a solid row of upright marble slabs, no joint or crack showing which portion of the wall was solid stone and which cunningly disguised door.

"*Sang du diable!*" de Grandin muttered. "But I do not like this place. It reminds me of that grim fortress of the Inquisition at Toldedo where the good fathers, dressed as demons, could appear and disappear at will through seeming solid walls and frighten the wits out of and the true faith into superstitious heretics."

I suppressed a shudder with difficulty. This underground house of secret doors was too reminiscent of other practises of the Spanish Inquisition besides the harmless mummery of the monks for my peace of mind.

"*Eh bien,*" de Grandin shrugged, "now we are here we may as well make the best of it. Lead on, *Diablotins*" — he turned to our dark-skinned guides — "we follow."

We were standing in a long, straight passage, smooth-walled with panels of polished marble, and, like the larger apartment, tiled with alternate squares of black and white. No doorways led off the aisle, but other corridors crossed it at right angles at intervals of thirty to thirty-five feet. Like the larger room, the passage was lighted by oil lamps swung from the ceiling.

Following our guides, we turned to the right down a passageway the exact duplicate of the first, entered a third corridor, and, after walking a considerable distance, made another turn and stopped before a narrow curtained archway. Through this we entered a large square room, windowless, but well lighted by lamps and furnished with two bedsteads of bamboo having strong China matting on them in lieu of springs or mattress. A low bamboo dressing table, fitted with a mirror of polished metal, and several reed chairs constituted the residue of the furniture.

One of the boys signed to us to remove our clothes, while the other ran out, returning almost immediately dragging two sheet-iron bath tubs after him. Placing these in the center of the room he left us again, and reappeared in a few minutes with a wheeled contrivance something like a child's express wagon in which stood six large earthen jars, four containing warm water, the other two cold.

We stepped into the tubs and the lads proceeded to rub us down with an oily liquid, strongly perfumed with sandalwood and very soothing to feel. When this had been well worked into our skins the lads poured the contents of the warm-water jars over us, splashing us thoroughly from hair to feet, then sluiced us off with a five-gallon douche of almost ice-cold water. Towels of coarse native linen were unfolded, and in less than five minutes we were as thoroughly cleansed, dried and invigorated as any patron of a Turkish bath at home.

I felt rather dubious when my personal attendant produced a clumsy native razor and motioned me to be seated in one of the cane chairs, but the lad proved a skilful barber, light and deft of touch and absolutely speechless—a great improvement upon the loquacious American tonsorialist. I thought.

Dinner clothes and a suit of carefully laundered white drill, all scented with the pungent, pleasing odor of clove husks, were brought in on wicker trays, and as we put the finishing touches on our toilet one of the lads produced a small casket of polished cedar in which reposed a layer of long, black cigars, the sort which retail for a dollar apiece in Havanna.

"*Nom d'un petit bonhomme!*" de Grandin exploded as he exhaled a lungful of the fragrant smoke; "this is marvelous; it is magnificent; it is superb—but I like it not, Friend Trowbridge."

"Bosh," I responded, puffing in placid content, "you're afraid of your shadow, de Grandin! Why, man, this is wonderful—think where we were this morning, shipwrecked, pursued by man-eaters, with starvation as the least of our perils, and look at us now, both dressed in clean clothes, with every attention and convenience we could have at home, and safe, man, safe."

"Safe?" he answered dubiously. "'Safe,' do you say? Did you apprehend, my friend, how our host, that so mysterious Monsieur Goonong, almost spoke of Captain Van Thun when the question of clothing you came up?"

"Why, now you speak of it, I do remember how he seemed about

to say something about Captain Something-or-Other, and apparently thought better of it," I agreed. "But what's that to do with us?"

The little Frenchman came close to me and sank his voice to a scarcely audible whisper: "Captain Franz Van Thun," he breathed, "was master of the Dutch Indiaman *Van Damm*, which sailed from Rotterdam to Sumatra, and was lost, as far as known, *with all on board*, on her homeward voyage."

"But—" I protest.

"*She-s-sh!*" he cut me off. "Those servant boys are beckoning: come, we are wanted elsewhere."

I looked up at the two mutes, and shuddered at sight of the leering grins on their faces.

4

THE LADS LED US THROUGH another bewildering series of corridors till our sense of location was completely obfuscated, finally paused, one on each side of an archway, and, bowing deeply, signaled us to enter.

We strode into a long, marble-tiled room which, unlike every other apartment in the queer house, was not brilliantly lighted. The room's sole illumination was furnished by the glow of fourteen wax candles set in two seven-branched silver candelabra which stood at opposite ends of a polished mahogany table of purest Sheraton design, its waxed surface giving back reflections of crystal, and silver dinner service fit for the table of a king.

"Ah, gentlemen," Goonong Besar, arrayed in immaculate evening clothes, greeted us from the farther end of the room. "I hope you have brought good appetites with you. I'm fairly ravenous, for my part. Will you join me?"

The same Malay servitors who had accompanied him at our meeting stood behind him now, their semi-military khaki jackets and *sarongs* exchanged for costumes of freshly ironed white linen and their rifles replaced by a pair of large-caliber Luger pistols which each wore conspicuously tucked in his scarlet silk cummerbund.

"Sorry I can't offer you a cocktail," our host apologized as we seated ourselves, "but ice is not among the improvements available in my modest little menage, unfortunately. However, we find the sea caves do quite well as refrigerators and I think you'll find this chilled wine really acceptable as a substitute. Ah"—he looked diffidently from one of us to

the other, finally fixing his gaze on me—"will you be good enough to ask the blessing. Dr. Trowbridge? You look as if you might be experienced in that line."

Startled, but greatly reassured by the request, I bowed my head and repeated the customary formula, almost springing from my chair with amazement as I opened my eyes at the prayer's end. While de Grandin and I had bent above the table during grace, the servants had pulled back the rich *batik* with which the wall facing us was draped, revealing a series of heavy plate glass panels against which the ocean's green waters pressed. We are looking directly on to the sea bottom.

"Jolly clever idea, what?" Goonong Besar inquired smiling at our surprised faces. "Thought it all up myself; like to see the little finny fellows swim past, you know. Had a beastly hard time getting workmen to do the job for me, too; but all sorts of unbelievable persons trickle into these islands from time to time—architects gone *ga-ga* with drink, skilled artisans in all the trades and what-not—I finally managed to collect the men I wanted."

"But, *Monsieur*, the expense," de Grandin protested with typical Gallic logic, "it must have been prodigious!"

"Oh, no," the young man answered negligently. "I had to feed the beggars, of course, but most of 'em were habituated to native food, and that's not very expensive."

"But their salaries," de Grandin persisted; "why, *Monsieur*, this house is a work of genius, a marvel of engineering; even drink-ruined architects and engineers capable of producing such a place as this would demand fabulous fees for their services—and the laborers, the men who cut and polished the marble here, they must have been numerous as an army; their wages would be ruinous."

"Most of the marble was salvaged from deserted Dutch colonial palaces," Goonong Besar replied. "You know, Holland built a mighty empire in these islands a century or so ago, and her planters lived in palaces fit for kings. When the empire crumbled the planters left, and he who cared to might help himself to their houses, wholly or in part. As for wages"—he waved a jeweled hand carelessly—"I am rich, but the wages made no great inroads on my fortune. Do you remember your medieval history, Dr. de Grandin?"

"Eh? But certainly," the Frenchman responded, "but . . ."

"Don't you recall, then, the precaution the nobles, ecclesiastical as well as temporal, took to insure the secrecy of their castle or cathedral plans?" He paused, smiling quizzically at de Grandin.

"*Parbleu!* But you would not; you could not, you would not dare!" the Frenchman almost shouted, half rising from his chair and staring at our host as though a mad dog sat in his place.

"Nonsense, of course I would--and did," the other replied good-humoredly. "Why not? The men were bits of human flotsam, not worth salvaging. And who was to know? Dead men are notoriously uncommunicative you know. Proverbially so, in fact."

"But, you tell this to me?" de Grandin looked at him incredulously.

Our host's face went perfectly expressionless as he stared directly at de Grandin for a period while one might count five slowly, then his dark, rather sullen face lighted with a smile. "May I offer you some more wine, my dear doctor?" he asked.

I looked alternately at my companions in wonderment. Goonong Besar had made some sinister implication which de Grandin had been quick to comprehend, I knew, and their subsequent conversation concerning dead men telling no tales contained a thinly veiled threat; but try as I would I could not find the key to their enigmatic talk. "Medieval castles and cathedrals? Dead men tell no tales?" I repeated to myself. What did it all mean?

Goonong Besar broke in on my thought: "May I offer you a bit more of this white meat, Dr. Trowbridge?" he asked courteously. "Really, we find this white meat" (the words were ever so slightly emphasized) "most delicious. So tender and well flavored, you know. Do you like it?"

"Very much, thank you," I replied. "It's quite different from anything I've ever tasted. In a way it reminds me of delicate young pork, yet it's different, too. Is it peculiar to the islands, Mr. Goonong?"

"Well--er"--he smiled slightly as he cut a thin slice of the delicious roast and placed it on my plate--"I wouldn't say it is peculiar to our islands, though we have an unusual way of preparing it in this house. The natives hereabouts refer to the animal from which it comes as 'long pig'--really a disgusting sort of beast while living; but quite satisfactory when killed and properly cooked. May I serve you again, Dr. de Grandin?" He turned toward the Frenchman with a smile.

I sat suddenly upright in utter, dumfounded amazement as I beheld de Grandin's face. He was leaning forward in his chair, his fierce little blue eyes very round and almost protruding from his head, his weather-tanned cheeks gone the color of putty as he stared at our host like a subject regarding a professional hypnotist. "*Dieu, grand Dieu!*" he ejacu-

lated in a choking whisper. "'Long pig,' did you say? *Sang de St. Denis!* And I have eaten it!"

"My dear chap, are you ill?" I cried, leaping from my chair and hastening to his side. "Has your dinner disagreed with you?"

"*Non, non!*" he waved me away, still speaking that choking whisper. "Sit down, Friend Trowbridge, sit down; but *par l'amour de Dieu*, I beseech you, eat no more of that accurst meat, at least not tonight."

"Oh, my dear sir!" Goonong Besar protested mildly. "You have spoiled Dr. Trowbridge's appetite, and he was enjoying this delicious white meat so much, too. This is really too bad, you know. Really, it is!"

He frowned at the silver meat plater before him a moment, then signalled one of his attendants to take it away, adding a quick command in Malayan as he did so.

"Perhaps a little entertainment will help us forget this unfortunate *contretemps*," he suggested. "I have sent for Miriam. You will like her, I fancy. I have great hopes for her; she has the makings of a really accomplished *artiste*, I think."

The servant who had taken away the meat returned and whispered something in our host's ear. As he listened, Goonong Besar's thin, well-bred face took on such an expression of fury as I had never before seen displayed by a human being. "What?" he shouted, forgetting, apparently, that the Malay did not understand English. "I'll see about this—we'll soon see who says 'must' and 'shall' in this house."

He turned to us with a perfunctory bow as he rose. "Excuse me, please," he begged. "A slight misunderstanding has arisen, and I must straighten it out. I shan't keep you waiting long, I hope; but if you wish anything while I am gone, Hussein"—he indicated the Malay who stood statue-still behind his chair—"will attend your wants. He speaks no English, but you can make him understand by signs, I think."

"Quick, de Grandin, tell me before he comes back," I besought as Goonong, accompanied by one of the Malays, left the room.

"Eh?" replied the Frenchman, looking up from an absorbed contemplation of the tableware before him. "What is it you would know, my friend?"

"What was all that word-juggling about medieval builders and dead men telling no tales?" I demanded.

"Oh, that?" he answered with a look of relief. "Why, do you not know that when a great lord of the Middle Ages commissioned an architect to build a castle for him it was almost tantamount to a death sentence? The

architect, the master builders, even the principal workmen, were usually done to death when the building was finished in order that they might not divulge its secret passages and hidden defenses to an enemy, or duplicate the design for some rival noble."

"Why—why, then, Goonong Besar meant he killed the men who built this submarine house for him!" I ejaculated, horror-stricken.

"Precisely," de Grandin answered, "but, bad as that may be, we have a more personal interest in the matter. Did you notice him when I showed surprise he should confess his guilt to us?"

"Good heavens, yes!" I answered. "He meant—"

"That, though still breathing, we are, to all intents, dead men," de Grandin supplied.

"And that talk of 'white meat,' and 'long pig'?" I asked.

He drew a shuddering breath, as though the marble-lined cavern had suddenly gone icy-cold. "Trowbridge, my friend," he answered in a low, earnest whisper, "you must know this thing; but you must control yourself, too. Not by word or sign must you betray your knowledge. Throughout these devil-ridden islands, wherever the brown fiends who are their natives eat men, they refer to the cannibal feast as a meal of long pig. That so unfortunate man we saw dead at the stake this morning, and that pitiful Dutch woman we saw clubbed to death—they, my friend, were 'long pigs.' That was the *white meat* this devil out of lowest hell set before us this night. That is the food we have eaten at this accursed table!"

"My God!" I half rose from my chair, then sank back, overcome with nausea. "Did we—do you suppose—was it *her* flesh—?"

"*S-s-sh!*" he warned sharply. "Silence, my friend; control yourself. Do not let him see you know. He is coming!"

As though de Grandin's words had been a theatrical cue for his entrance, Goonong Besar stepped through the silken portieres at the doorway beyond the table, a pleased smile on his swarthy face. "So sorry to keep you waiting," he apologized. "The trouble is all adjusted now, and we can proceed with our entertainment. Miriam is a little diffident before strangers, but I—er—persuaded her to oblige us." He turned toward the door through which he had entered and waved his hand to someone behind the curtains.

Three Malays, one a woman bent with age and hideously wrinkled, the other two vacant-faced youths, came through the doorway at his gesture. The woman, bearing a section of bamboo fitted with drumheads of rawhide at each end, led the way, the first boy rested his hand on her shoulder, and the second lad, in turn, held tightly to his companion's

jacket. A second glance told us the reason for this procedure. The woman, though aged almost to the point of paralysis, possessed a single malignant, blood-shot eye; both boys were sightless, their scarred and sunken eyelids telling mutely of eyeballs gouged from their faces by unskilled hands which had torn the surrounding tissues as they ripped the optics from the quivering flesh.

"*Ha-room; ha-room!*" cried the old crone in a cracked treble, and the two blind boys seated themselves cross-legged on the marble floor. One of them raised a reed pipe to his lips, the other rested a sort of zither upon his knees, and each began trying his instrument tentatively, producing a sound approximating the complaints of a tom-cat suffering with cholera morbus.

"*Ha-room; ha-room!*" the hag cried again, and commenced beating a quick rhythm on her drum, using her fingertips and the heels of her hands alternately for drumsticks. "*Tauk-auk-a—tau-k-auk-a—tau-k-auk-a!*" the drum-beats boomed hollowly, the first stroke heavily accented, the second and third following in such quick succession that they seemed almost indivisible parts of one continuous thrumming.

Now the pipe and zither took up the tribrach tune, and a surge of fantastic music swirled and eddied through the marble-walled apartment. It was unlike anything I had ever heard, a repetitious, insistent, whining of tortured instruments, an air that pleaded with the hearers' evil nature to overthrow restraint and give the beast within him freedom, a harmony that drugged the senses like opium or the extract of the cola-nut. The music raced and soared, faster, shriller and higher, the painted-silk curtains swung apart and a girl glided out upon the tessellated pavement.

She was young—sixteen, or seventeen at the most—and the sinuous, lithe grace of her movements was as much due to healthy and perfectly co-ordinated muscles as to training. The customary *sarong* of the islands encased her nether limbs, but, instead of the native woman's jacket, her *sarong* was carried up beyond the gold six-inch wide belt about her waist and tightly wrapped about her bosom so that it formed a single comprehensive garment covering her from armpits to ankles. Save for a chaplet of blazing cabochon rubies about her slender throat, her neck and shoulders were bare, but ornaments in the form of flexible golden snakes with emerald eyes twined up each arm from elbow to shoulder, and bangles of pure, soft gold, hung with triple rows of tiny hawk-bells, circled her wrists. Other bangles, products of the finest goldsmiths of India, jangled about her white ankles above the pearl-enerusted slippers

of amethyst velvet, while the diamond aigret fastened comb-fashion in her sleekly parted black hair was worth a king's ransom. Fit to ransom a monarch, too, was the superb blue-white diamond of her nose-stud, fixed in her left nostril, and the rope of pearls which circled her waist and hung swaying to the very hem of her *sarong* of Philippine pineapple gauze was fit to buy the Peacock Throne of the Grand Mogul himself.

Despite the lavishly applied cosmetics, the antimony which darkened her eyelids to the color of purple grape skins, the cochineal which dyed her lips and cheeks a brilliant scarlet and the powdered charcoal which traced her eyebrows in continuous, fluted line across her forehead, she was beautiful with the rich, ripe beauty of the women who inspired Solomon of old to indite his *Song of Songs*. None but the Jewish race, or perhaps, the Arabian, could have produced a woman with the passionate, alluring beauty of Miriam, the dancer in the house beneath the sea.

Back and forth across the checkered floor the girl wove her dance, tracing patterns intricate as lace from Canary or the looms of spiders over the marble with the soft soles of her velvet slippers, the chiming bells at her wrists and ankles keeping time to the calling, luring tune of the old hag and her blind musicians with the consummate art of a Spanish castanet dancer following the music with her hand cymbals.

At last the dance was done.

Shaking like a leaf with the intoxication of her own rhythmic movements, Miriam flung herself full length face downward, before Goonong Besar, and lay upon the marble floor in utter, abject self-abasement.

What he said to her we did not understand, for the words were in harsh Malayan, but he must have given her permission to go, for she rose from her prostration like a dog expecting punishment when its master relents, and ran from the room, bracelets and anklets ringing time to her panic flight, pearls clicking together as they swayed with the motion of her *sarong*.

The old crone rose, too, and led her blind companions from the room, and we three sat staring at each other under the winking candles' light with the two impassive Malay guards standing motionless behind their master's chair.

"Do you think she is beautiful?" Goonong Besar asked as he lighted a cigarette and blew a cloud of smoke toward the copper ceiling.

"Beautiful?" de Grandin gasped, "*Mon Dieu, Monsieur*, she is wonderful, she is magnificent, she is superb. Death of my life, but she is divine! Never have I seen such a dancer; never such, such—*nom de Dieu*, I

am speechless as the fish! In all the languages I know there are no words to describe her!"

"And you, Dr. Trowbridge, what do you think of my little Miriam?" Goonong addressed me.

"She is very lovely," I acknowledged, feeling the words foolishly inadequate.

"Ha, ha," he laughed good-naturedly. "Spoken with true Yankee conservatism, by Jove.

"And that, gentlemen," he continued, "leads us to an interesting little proposition I have to make you. But first you will smoke? You'll find these cigars really good. I import them from Havana." He passed the polished cedar humidor across the table and held a match for us to light our selections of the expensive tobacco.

"Now, then," he commenced, inhaling a deep lungful of smoke, "first a little family history, then my business proposition. Are you ready, gentlemen?"

De Grandin and I nodded, wondering mutely what the next chapter in this novel of incredible surprises would be.

5

"WHEN WE MET SO AUSPICIOUSLY this afternoon," our host began in his pleasant voice, "I requested that you call me Goonong Besar. That, however, is what we might call, for want of a better term, merely my *non de l'ile*. Actually, gentlemen, I am the Almost Honorable James Abingdon Richardson.

"*Parbleu, Monsieur*," de Grandin demanded, "how is it you mean that, 'the Almost Honorable'?"

The young man blew a cloud of fragrant smoke toward the room's copper ceiling and watched it float upward a moment before he replied: "My father was an English missionary, my mother a native princess. She was not of the Malay blood, but of the dominant Arab strain, and was known as Laila, Pearl of the Islands.

"My father had alienated himself from his family when he and an elder sister deserted the Church of England and, embracing a dissenting creed, came to Malay to spread the gospel of repentance or damnation among the heathen in their blindness."

He drew thoughtfully at his cigar and smiled rather bitterly as he resumed: "He was a fine figure of a man, that father of mine, six feet tall, blue-eyed and curly-haired, with a deep, compelling voice and the

fire of fanaticism burning in his heart. The natives, Arab and Malay alike, took to his fiery gospel as the desert dwellers of Arabia once listened to the preaching of Mohammed, the camel driver. My grandfather, a pirate prince with a marble palace and thousand slaves of his own, was one of the converts, and came to the mission bringing his ten-year-old daughter, Laila, with him. He left her at the mission school to learn the gentle teachings of the Prophet of Nazareth. She stayed there four years."

Again our host paused, puffing silently at his cigar, seemingly attempting to marshal his thoughts. "I believe I said my father was a dissenting clergyman? Yes, so I did, to be sure. Had he been a member of the established church things might have been different. The established English clergy are bad enough, with their fox hunting and general worldliness, but they're usually sportsmen. When she was a scant fifteen years old—women of the East mature more rapidly than your Weytern women, you know—Laila, the Pearl of the Islands, came back to her father's palace of marble and cedar, bearing a little boy baby in her arms. The charitable Christian sister of the missionary had driven her out of the mission settlement when she learned that she (the sister) was about to have a little nephew whose birth was not pre-sanctified by a wedding ring.

"The old pirate prince was furious. He would have put his daughter and her half-caste child to death and swooped down on the mission with fire and dagger, but my mother had learned much of Christian charity during her stay at the school. She was sure, if she went to my father with as many pearls as her hands could hold, and with a dowry of rubies strung round her neck, he would receive her as his wife—er—make an honest woman of her, as the saying goes.

"However, one thing and another prevented her return to the mission for three years, and when we finally got there we found my reverend sire had taken an English lady to wife.

"Oh, he took the jewels my mother brought—no fear of his refusing—and in return for them he permitted us to live in the settlement as native hangers-on. She, a princess, and the daughter of generations of princesses, scrubbed floors and baked bread in the house presided over by my father's wife and I, my father's first-born son, duly christened with his name, fetched and carried for my father's younger sons.

"They were hard, those days at the mission school. The white boys who were my half-brothers overlooked no chance to remind me of mother's shame and my own disgrace. Humility and patience under

affliction were the lessons my mother and I had ground into us day by day while we remained there.

"Then, when I was a lad of of ten years or so, my father's cousin, Viscount Abingdon, broke his neck at a fox hunt, and, as he died without issue, my father became a member of England's landed gentry, and went back home to take over the title and the entails. He borrowed on his expectancy before he left and offered my mother money to have me educated as a clerk in some trader's store, but my mother, for all her years of servitude, was still a princess of royal blood. Also she remembered enough Scripture to quote, 'Thy money perish with thee.' So she spat in his face and went back to the palace of her father, telling him that her husband was dead.

"I was sent to school in England—oh, yes, I'm a public school man, Winchester, you know—and I was down from my first term at Cambridge when the war broke out in 1914.

"Why should I have fought for England? What had England or the English ever done for me? It was the call of the blood—the English blood—perhaps. At any rate I joined up and was gazetted to a London regiment. Everything was death or glory those days, you know. 'For King and Country,' and all that sort of tosh. Racial lines were wiped out, and every man, whatever his color or creed, was for the common cause. Rot!

"I came into the officers' mess one night after a hard day's drill, and was presented to a young man from one of the guards regiments. 'Lieutenant Richardson,' my captain said, 'this is Lieutenant Richardson. Queer coincidence, you chaps are both James Abingdon Richardson. Ought to be great pals on that account, what?'

"The other Lieutenant Richardson looked me over from head to foot, then repeated distinctly, so everyone in the room could hear and understand. 'James, my boots need polishing. Attend to it.' It was the same order he had given me at the mission school a hundred times when we were lads together. He was Lieutenant the Honorable James Abingdon Richardson, *legitimate* eldest son of Viscount Abingdon. I was . . ."

He broke off, staring straight before him a moment, then: "There was a devil of a row. Officers weren't supposed to beat other officers into insensibility in company mess, you know. I was dismissed from the service, and came back to the islands.

"My grandfather was dead; so was my mother. I was monarch of all I surveyed—if I was willing not to look too far—and since my return

I have consecrated my life to repaying my debt to my father on such of his race as crossed my path.

"The hunting has been fairly good, too. White men are such fools! Ship after ship has run aground on the rocks here, sometimes in answer to my signal rockets, sometimes mistaking the red and green lamps on the hill up yonder for ships' lights.

"It's been profitable. Nearly every ship so far has contained enough loot to make the game distinctly worth the trouble. I must admit your ship was somewhat of a disappointment in respect of monetary returns, but then I have had the pleasure of your company; that's something.

"I keep a crew of Papuans around to do the dirty work, and let 'em eat a few' prisoners now and then by way of reward—don't mind an occasional helping of 'long pig' myself, as a matter of fact, provided it's a white one.

"But"—he smiled unpleasantly—"conditions aren't ideal, yet. I still have to install electricity in the house and rig up a wireless apparatus—I could catch more game that way—and then there's the question of women. Remember how Holy Writ says, 'It is not good for man to dwell alone?' I've found it out, already.

"Old Umera, the woman who played the drum tonight, and the slave girl, Miriam, are the only women in the establishment, thus far, but I intend to remedy that—soon. I shall send to one of the larger islands and buy several of the most beautiful maidens available within the next few months, and live as befits a prince—a pirate prince, even as my grandfather was.

"Now, white men"—his suave manner dropped from him like a mask let down, and implacable hatred glared from his dark eyes—"this is my proposition to you. Before I establish my seraglio it is necessary that I possess suitable furniture. I can not spare any of my faithful retainers for the purpose of attending my women, but you two come into my hands providentially. Both of you are surgeons—you shall perform the necessary operations on each other. It is a matter of indifference to me which of you operates first—you may draw straws for the privilege, if you wish—but it is my will that you do this thing, and my will is law on this island."

Both de Grandin and I looked at him in speechless horror, but he took no notice of amazement. "You may think you will refuse," he told us, "but you will not. Captain Van Thun, of the Dutch steamer *Van Damm*, and his first mate were offered the same chance and refused it. They chose to interview a little pet I keep about the premises as an

alternative: but when the time for the interview came both would gladly have reconsidered their decision. This house is the one place in the world where a white man must keep his word, willy-nilly. Both of them were obliged to carry out their bargain to the letter--and I can not say the prestige of the pure Caucasian breed was strengthened by the way they did it.

"Now, I will give you gentlemen a greater opportunity for deliberation than I gave the Dutchmen. You shall first be allowed to see my pet, then decide whether you will accept my offer or not. But I warn you beforehand, whatever decision you make must be adhered to.

"Come." He turned to the two armed Malays who stood behind his chair and barked an order. Instantly de Grandin and I were covered by their pistols, and the scowling faces behind the firearms' sights told us we might expect no quarter if the order to fire were given.

"Come," Goonong Besar--or Richardson--repeated imperiously, "walk ahead, you two, and remember, the first attempt either of you makes to escape will mean a bullet through his brain."

We marched down a series of identical corridors as bewildering as the labyrinth of Crete, mysterious stone doors thudding shut behind us from time to time, other doors swinging open in the solid walls as our guards pressed cunningly-concealed springs in the walls or floor. Finally we brought up on a sort of colonnaded porch, a tiled footpath bordered with a low stone parapet from which a row of carved stone columns rose to a concave ceiling of natural stone. Below the balcony's balustrade stretched a long, narrow pool of dead-motionless water between abrupt vertical walls of rock, and, some two hundred feet away, through the arch of a natural cave, the starlit tropical sky showed like a little patch of freedom before our straining eyes. The haze which had thickened the air the previous night must have cleared away, for rays of the bright, full moon painted a "path to Spain" over the waters at the cavern's mouth, and sent sufficient light as far back as our balcony to enable us to distinguish an occasional tiny ripple on the glassy surface below us.

"Here, pretty, pretty!" our captor called, leaning forward between two columns. "Come up and see the brave white men who may come to play with you. Here, pretty pet; come up, come up!"

We stared into the purple waters like lost souls gazing on the hell prepared for them, but no motion agitated the depths.

"Sulky brute!" the half-caste exclaimed, and snatched a pistol from the girdle of one of his attendants. "Come up," he repeated harshly.

"Damn you, come when I call!" He tossed the weapon into the pool below.

De Grandin and I uttered a gasp of horror in unison, and I felt his nails bite into my arm as his strong slender fingers gripped me convulsively.

As though the pistol had been superheated and capable of setting the water in the cave boiling by its touch, the deep, blue-black pool beneath us suddenly woke to life. Ripples—living, groping ripples—appeared on the pool's smooth face and long, twisting arms, sinuous as snakes, thick as fire-hose, seemed waving just under the surface, flicking into the air now and again and displaying tentacles roughened with great, wart-like protuberances. Something like a monster bubble, transparent-gray like a jelly-fish, yet, oddly, spotted like an unclean reptile, almost as big around as the umbrellas used by teamsters on their wagons in summertime, and, like an umbrella, ribbed at regular intervals, rose from the darker water, and a pair of monstrous, hideous white eyes, large as dinner plates, with black pupils large as saucers, stared greedily, unwinkingly, at us.

"*Nom de Dieu de nom de Dieu!*" de Grandin breathed. "The sea-devil; the giant octopus!"

"Quite so," Goonong Besar agreed affably, "the giant octopus. What he grasps he holds forever, and he grasps all he can reach. A full-grown elephant thrown into that water would have no more chance of escape than a minnow—or, for unpleasant example, than you gentlemen would. Now, perhaps you realize why Captain Van Thun and his first officer wished they had chosen to enter my—er—employ, albeit in a somewhat extraordinary capacity. I did not afford them a chance of viewing the alternative beforehand, as I have you, however. Now that you have had your chance, I am sure you will take the matter under serious advisement before you refuse.

"There is no hurry; you will be given all tonight and tomorrow to arrive at a decision. I shall expect your answer, at dinner tomorrow. Good gentlemen, my boys will show you to your room. Good night, and—er—may I wish you pleasant dreams?"

With a mocking laugh he stepped quickly back into the shadows, we heard the sound we had come to recognize as the closing of one of the hidden stone doors, and found ourselves alone upon the balcony overlooking the den of the giant octopus.

"*Bon Dieu!*" de Grandin cried despairingly, "Trowbridge, my friend,

they make a mistake, those people who insist the devil dwells in hell. *Parbleu!* What is that?"

The noise which startled him was the shuffling of bare brown feet. The tongueless youths who acted as our *valets de chambre* were coming reluctantly toward us down the passageway, their eyes rolling in fearful glances toward the balustrade beyond which the devil of the sea lurked in his watery lair.

"*Eh bien,*" the Frenchman shrugged, "it is the two devilkins again. Lead on, *mes enfants*; any place is better than this threshold of hell.

5

"AND NOW," HE ANNOUNCED as he dropped into one of the bedroom's wicker chairs and lighted a cigarette, "we are in what you Americans would call a tight fix, Friend Trowbridge. To accede to that half-caste hellion's proposition would be to dishonor ourselves forever—that is unthinkable. But to be eaten up by that so infernal octopus, that, too, is unthinkable. *Morbleu,* had I known then what I know now I should have demanded one thousand pounds a day from those Messieurs Lloyd and then refused their offer. As your so splendid soldiers were wont to say during the war, we are, of a surety, S. O. L., my friend."

Beneath the bamboo bedstead across the room a slight rustling sounded. I looked apathetically toward the bed, indifferent to any fresh horror which might appear; but, wretched as I was, I was not prepared for the apparition which emerged.

Stripped of her gorgeous raiment of pineapple gauze, a *sarong* and jacket of the cheapest native cotton inadequately covering her glorious body, an ivory-wood button replacing her diamond nose-stud, her feet bare and no article of jewelry adorning her, Miriam, the dancer, crept forth and flung herself to her knees before de Grandin.

"Oh, *Monsieur,*" she begged in a voice choked with tears, "have pity on me, I implore you. Be merciful to me, as you would have another in your place be pitiful to your sister, were she in mine."

"*Morbleu,* child, is it of me you ask pity?" de Grandin demanded. "How can I, who can not even choose my own death, show compassion to you?"

"Kill me," she answered fiercely. "Kill me now, while yet there is time. See, I have brought you this"—from the folds of her scanty *sarong* she drew a native *kris*, a wavy-bladed short sword with a razor edge and needle point.

"Stab me with it," she besought, "then, if you wish, use it on your friend and yourself; there is no other hope. Look about you, do not you see there is no way of dying in this prison room? Once on a time the mirror was of glass, but a captive white man broke it and almost succeeded in cutting his wrists with the pieces until he died. Since then Goonong Besar has had a metal mirror in this room."

"*Pardieu*, you are right, child!" de Grandin agreed as he glanced at the dressing table over which the metal mirror hung. "But why do you seek death? Are you, too, destined for the octopus?"

She shuddered. "Some day, perhaps, but while I retain my beauty there is small fear of that. Every day old Umera, the one-eyed she-devil teaches me to dance, and when I do not please her (and she is very hard to please) she beats me with bamboo rods on the soles of my feet till I can scarcely bear to walk. And Goonong Besar makes me dance for him every night till I am ready to drop, and if I do not smile upon him as I dance, or if I grow weary too soon, so that my feet lag before he gives me permission to stop, he beats me.

"Every time a ship is caught in his trap he saves some of the officers and makes me dance before them, and I know they are to be fed to the fish-devil, yet I must smile upon them, or he will beat me till my feet bleed, and the old woman will beat me when he is weary of it.

"My father was French, *Monsieur*, though I, myself, was born in England of a Spanish mother. We lost all our money in the war, for my father kept a goldsmith's shop in Rheims, and the *sale boche* stole everything he had. We came to the islands after the war, and my father made money as a trader. We were returning home on the Dutch ship *Van Damm* when Goonong Besar caught her in his trap.

"Me he kept to be taught to dance the dances of the islands and to be tortured—see, he has put a ring in my nose, like a native woman's." She lifted a trembling hand to the wooden peg which kept the hole pierced in her nose from growing together when she was not wearing her jeweled stud. "My father—oh, God of Israel!—he fed to the devil-fish before my eyes and told me he would serve me the same way if I proved not submissive to his will in all things.

"And so, *Monsieur*," she ended simply, "I would that you cause me to die and be out of my unhappiness."

As the girl talked, de Grandin's face registered every motion from amazement to horror and compassion. As she completed her narrative he looked thoughtful. "Wait, wait, my pretty one," he besought, as she would have forced the *kris* into his hand. "I must think. *Pardieu*! Jules

de Grandin, you silly fool, you must think now as never before." He sank his face in his hands and bowed his chin nearly to his knees.

"Tell me, my little cabbage," he demanded suddenly, "do they let you out of this accursed house by daylight, *hein?*?"

"Oh, yes," she responded. "I may go or come as I will when I am not practising my dances or being beaten. I may go anywhere on the island I wish, for no one, not even the cannibals who live on the shore, would dare lay his little finger on me for fear of the master. I belong to Goonong Besar, and he would feed anyone who touched his property to the great fish-devil."

"And why have you never sought to die by your own hand?" de Grandin asked suspiciously.

"Jews do not commit suicide," she answered proudly. "To die by another's hand is not forbidden—Jephthah's daughter so died—but to go from life with your hands reddened with your own blood is against the law of my fathers."

"Ah, yes, I understand," he agreed with a short nod. "You children of Jacob shame us so-called Christians in the way you keep your precepts, child. *Eh bien*, 'tis fortunate for all us you have a strong conscience, my beautiful.

"Attend me: In your walks about this never-enough-to-be-execrated island have you observed, near the spot where the masts which carry the false ship's lights stand, certain plants growing, plants with shining leaves and a fruit like the unripe apple which grows in France—a low bush with fruit of pale green?"

The girl wrinkled her white forehead thoughtfully, then nodded twice. "Yes," she replied, "I have seen such a plant."

"*Tres bien*," he nodded approvingly, "the way from this evil place seems to open before us, *mes amis*. At least, we have the sporting chance. Now listen, and listen well, my little half-orange, for upon your obedience rests our chance of freedom.

"Tomorrow, when you have a chance to leave this vestibule of hell, go you to the place where those fruits like apples grow and gather as many of them as you can carry in your *sarong*. Bring these fruits of the *Cocculus indicus* to the house and mash them to a pulp in some jar which you must procure. At the dinner hour, pour the contents of that jar into the water where dwells the devil-fish. Do not fail us, my little pigeon, for upon your faithful performance of your trust our lives, and yours, depend *Pardieu!* If you do but carry out your orders we shall feed that Monsieur Octopus such a meal as he will have small belly for, *parbleu!*

"When you have poured all the crushed fruit into the water, secret yourself in the shadows near by and wait till we come. You can swim? Good. When we do leap into the water, do you leap also, and altogether we shall swim to that boat I was about to borrow when we met this so excellent Monsieur Goonong-Besar-James-Abingdon-Richardson-Devil. *Cordieu*, I think that Jules de Grandin is not such a fool as I thought he was!

"Good night, fairest one, and may the God of your people, and the gentle Mary, too, guard you this night, and all the nights of your life."

7

"GOOD EVENING, GENTLEMEN," Goonong Besar greeted as we entered the dining room next evening; "have you decided upon our little proposition?"

"But certainly," de Grandin assured him. "If we must choose between a few minutes' conversation with the octopus and a lifetime, or even half an hour's sight of your neither-black-nor-white face, we cast our vote for the fish. He, at least, does what he does from nature; he is no vile parody of his kind. Let us go to the fish-house *tout vite*, *Monsieur*. The sooner we get this business completed, the sooner we shall be rid of you!"

Goonong Besar's pale countenance went absolutely livid with fury. "You insignificant little fool," he cried, "I'll teach you to insult me! *Ha-room!*" he sent the call echoing through the marble-lined cave, "You'll not be so brave when you feel those tentacles strangling the life out of your puny body and that beak tearing your flesh off your bones before the water has a chance to drown you."

He poured a string of burning orders at his two guards, who seized their rifles and thrust them at us. "Off, off to the grotto!" he shrieked, beside himself with rage. "Don't think you can escape the devil-fish by resisting my men. They won't shoot to kill; they'll only cripple you and drag you to the pool. Will you walk, or shall we shoot you first and pull you there?"

"*Monsieur*," de Grandin drew himself proudly erect, "a gentleman of France fears no death a Malay *batard* can offer. Lead on!"

Biting his pale lips till the blood ran to keep from screaming with fury, Goonong Besar signaled his guards, and we took up our way toward the sea monster's lair.

"*Le bon Dieu grant la belle juive* has done her work thoroughly," de Grandin whispered as we came out upon the balcony. "I like not this part of our little playlet, my friend. Should our plan have failed, *adieu*." He gave my hand a hasty pressure.

"Who goes first?" Goonong Besar asked as we halted by the balustrade.

"*Pardieu*, you do!" de Grandin shouted, and before anyone was aware of his intention he dashed one of his small hard fists squarely into the astonished half-caste's face, seized him about the waist and flung him bodily into the black, menacing water below.

"In, Friend Trowbridge!" he called, leaping upon the parapet. "Dive and swim — it is our only chance!"

I waited no second bidding, but jumped as far outward as possible, striking out vigorously toward the far end of the cave, striving to keep my head as near water-level as possible, yet draw an occasional breath.

Horror swam beside me. Each stroke I took I expected one of the monster's slimy tentacles to seize me and drag me under; but no great, gray bubble rose from the black depths, no questing arms reached toward me. For all we could observe to the contrary, the pool was as harmless as any of the thousands of rocky caves which dot the volcanic coast of Malaya.

Bullets whipped and tore the water around us, striking rocky walls and singing off in vicious ricochets; but the light was poor, and the Malay marksmen emptied their pieces with no effect.

"*Triomphe*!" de Grandin announced, blowing the water from his mouth in a great, gusty sigh of relief as we gained the single outside the cave. "Miriam, my beautiful one, are you with us?"

"Yes," responded a voice from the darkness. "I did as you bade me, *Monsieur*, and the great fish-devil sank almost as soon as he thrust his snake-arms into the fruit as it floated on the water. But when I saw he was dead I did not dare wait; but swam out here to abide your coming."

"It is good," de Grandin commended. "One of those bullets might easily have hit you. They are execrable marksmen, those Malays, but accidents do occur.

"Now, *Monsieur*," he addressed the limp bundle he towed behind him in the water, "I have a little business proposition to make to *you*. Will you accompany us, and be delivered to the Dutch or British to be hanged for the damned pirate you are, or will you fight me for your so miserable life here and now?"

"I cannot fight you now," Goonong Besar answered, "you broke my

arm with your cowardly ju-jitsu when you took advantage of me and attacked me without warning."

"Ah, so?" de Grandin replied, helping his captive to the beach. "That is unfortunate, for— *mordieu*, scoundrel, would you do so!"

The Eurasian had suddenly drawn a dagger from his coat and lunged viciously at de Grandin's breast.

With the agility of a cat the Frenchman evaded the thrust, seized his antagonist's wrist, and twisted the knife from his grasp. His foot shot out, he drove his fist savagely into Goonong's throat, and the half-caste sprawled helplessly on the sand.

"Attend *Mademoiselle*!" de Grandin called to me. "It is not well for her to see what I must do here."

There was the sound of a scuffle, then a horrible gargling noise, and the beating of hands and feet upon the sands.

"*Fini*!" de Grandin remarked nonchalantly, dipping his hands in the water and cleansing them of some dark stains.

"You . . . ?" I began.

"*Mais certainement*," he replied matter-of-factly. "I slit his throat. What would you have? He was a mad dog; why should he continue to live?"

Walking hurriedly along the beach, we came to the little power-boat moored in the inlet and set her going.

"Where to?" I asked as de Grandin swung the trim little craft around a rocky promontory.

"Do you forget, *cher* Trowbridge, that we have a score to settle with those cannibals?" he asked.

We settled it. Running the launch close inshore, de Grandin shouted defiance to the Papuans till they came tumbling out of their cone-shaped huts like angry bees from their hives.

"*Sa ha, messires*," de Grandin called, "we give you food of another sort this night. Eat it, *sacre canaille*; eat it!" The Lewis machine-gun barked and sputtered, and a chorus of cries and groans rose from the beach.

"It is well," he announced as he resumed the wheel. "They eat no more white women, those ones. Indeed, did I still believe the teachings of my youth, I should say they were even now partaking of the devil's hospitality with their late master."

"But see here," I demanded as we chugged our way toward the open water, "what was it you told Miriam to put in the water where the octopus was, de Grandin?"

He chuckled. "Had you studied as much biology as I, Friend Trowbridge, you would recognize that glorious plant, the *Cocculus indicus*, when you saw it. All over the Polynesian islands the lazy natives, who desire to obtain food with the minimum of labor, mash up the berry of that plant and spread it in the water where the fish swim. A little of it will render the fish insensible, a little more will kill him as dead as the late lamented Goonong Besar. I noticed that plant growing on the island, and when our lovely Jewess told me she could go and come at will I said to me, 'By the George, why not have her poison that great devil-fish and swim to freedom?' *Voila tout!*"

A passing Dutch steamer picked us up two days later.

The passengers and crew gaped widely at Miriam's imperial beauty, and wider still at de Grandin's account of our exploits. "*Pardieu!*" he confided to me one night as we walked the deck, "I fear those Dutchmen misbelieve me, Friend Trowbridge. Perhaps I shall have to slit their ears to teach them to respect the word of a Frenchman."

It was six months later that a Western Union messenger entered my consulting room at Harrisonville and handed me a blue-and-white envelope. "Sign here," he ordered.

I tore the envelope open, and this is what I read:

*Miriam made big sensation in Follies Bergeres tonight. Felicitations.
De Grandin*

Coming Next Issue

Three days later, Taine made another visit to the mayor's office. "Find out anything?" asked his honor?

"Yes, one ancestor. He was living over in Cherry Valley during the Revolution. They called him to sixty days active duty, but he simply paid his fine of forty pounds and stayed on his farm. It seems that a number of Monroe County patriots were that kind of soldiers."

The politician looked at the detective and sighed. "What has all that got to do with Wolf Hollow?"

"Nothing, but I forgot my real reason for calling on you. I had a few pictures made of the place from a plane. Here is one. Does that look like Wolf Hollow? Shows everything rather well, I think. Now, here is an interesting one. What does that look like to you?"

"Why, they look like a lot of captive balloons, or big toadstools, something like that. What did you make out of it?"

"Not much. But this is what I think. Dr. Hallowell has built a lot of huge wire cages and he has something inside of them. Of course, if those things are wire cages, it means that the things inside are alive. He would not build cages to put balloons in, would he? Now, here is one more thing I found. A year ago he was buying mice from pathological supply houses. Then he started buying rats, by the hundred. Then cats. And six months ago he took over a hundred sheep into the Hollow and a little later on, as many young steers. Here is an interesting fact. We took serial pictures of the whole Hollow. I have had an expert study those pictures and we cannot find a sign of sheep or the steers. Just went into the Hollow and disappeared. Of course, the cats might have eaten the rats and mice, but the steers could hardly have eaten the sheep."

"You found out a lot in three days," commented the mayor.

"That part was easy," whispered the little detective. "Anyone could have found out about the animals. But there are no signs of cattle or sheep; in fact there is not enough grazing area to support so large a number of animals as he imported. Neither is there any indication of farming, so I want to know the meaning of the advertisements he placed in the Philadelphia papers for the immediate employment of two hundred experienced farm hands. Already there are a hundred forty-four men waiting orders to report for work. White mice and even cows might be fitted in somewhere, but so many humans? And for what? Why didn't he advertise in the local papers?"

Taine of San Francisco is called in to solve the riddle of the

WOLF HOLLOW BUBBLES

by David H. Keller, M.D.

the cauldron

It is with sorrow that we inform those of you who have not seen notices elsewhere of the death of William A. P. White, best known to lovers of fantasy and science fiction as Anthony Boucher. While in many instances an author will choose a pseudonym for dubious reasons, Tony had one of the best: he found out that the Library of Congress already had 75 William Whites in their files; thus was born the unique Tony Boucher.

He wrote under a variety of pen-names for other reasons, too, some of which had to do with allying a particular name with a specialized type of writing, or with a particular publication. For many years, his column dealing with detective and mystery novels appeared in Sunday Book Review section of the *New York Times*; and I shall be everlastingly grateful to him for his notice about *The Chronological Holmes*, by William S. Baring-Gould (see *The Editors Page* for further details) which introduced me to the activities of the Baker Street Irregulars. Tony himself wrote several monographs on various aspects of the conan, and I regret the indolence which resulted in my not procuring a copy of *Profile by Gaslight*, which contained his "Was the Later Holmes an Impositor?", as well the essay by Fletcher

Pratt on Holmes' cryptological adventure.

He first came to my attention as author of some fascinating tales in *ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION* and *The Compleat Werewolf*, in *UNKNOWN*. But he is, of course, best known to us as Founding Editor, along with J. Francis McComas, of *MAGAZINE OF FANTASY*; and the Boucher Era in the annals of that publication is no less marked than the Tremaine Era of *ASTOUNDING STORIES*, referring not so much to the worth of stories appearing under his directorship (though the measure of achievement is considerable) as to the personality and tone that the magazine had when he was at the helm, even though the command was divided at first.

My thanks to another Doer of Good, one *James R. Sieger*, who sent me a long list of authors with birth and death data, where available. While this, and any further list, contains some duplications, any sizeable fraction of new data makes it worth having.

Mr. Sieger asks in his accompanying letter: "How come you haven't yet tried to reprint Nelson Bond? He's written some very excellent fantasies. Also, he told me (c. 1960) that he was interested in

writing again, having finally put his business on its own feet; but as no new Bond stories have appeared, I suspect he was unable to find a market.

"Another thing: there was a discussion of Clark Ashton Smith's *The Double Shadow* in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* #20 (March, 1968). That \$10 price tag seems extreme, since the booklet was still available from the author up to the time he died, in 1961. I got my copy from him, mint and autographed, in November 1960 for \$2.25. It was published by the *Auburn Journal* (presumably a local newspaper) in 1933."

Stories by Nelson S. Bond are not presently available to me for reprint, and I haven't seen any new manuscripts from him. This is the reason why he hasn't appeared in any of our publications.

While history never repeats itself exactly, there are nonetheless fascinating similarities that come up every now and then. Reading through *The Eyrie* in the old issues of *WEIRD TALES*, we find that the de Grandin series was somewhat controversial, in that while most of the active readers of the time were enthusiastically in favor, there was a minority which was no less reactive in dislike.

When we started publishing *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, and I had no evidence to go upon, I used the editor's prerogative of selecting stories I enjoyed with the hope and belief that a majority of the readers would likewise enjoy them. I knew that there would be a percentage of oldtimers who had loved the de Grandin tales and would

appreciate seeing them again, for only a minority within this fraction would still have copies of the magazines wherein they had first read the tales; and a fair number would not have seen them all.

But what about the larger percentage of readers who had never read any of them, and had never seen *WEIRD TALES* at all?

The data remain small. While magazines of the nature of *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES* receive more letters and comment from readers than do magazines of different types, the actual statistical sample has rarely, if ever, been as high as 1% for any given issue. Nonetheless, a wide variety of response can be found here, and the best I can do is to assume that this miniature response roughly corresponds to the feelings of the readership as a whole.

And what the active readers have written to me indicates that history has repeated itself. The majority love de Grandin even while they discriminate between stories. With the minority, whose feelings are no less strong, it can be said that they find some less bad than others. Here is a sample of the opposing sentiment.

Alfred Jan, writes from Berkeley, California: "I noticed your Winter #7 copy of SMS is the only one so far which does not have a de Grandin tale. I would like to see more like it. To me, de Grandin is an over-pompous stuffshirt, and to see him in every issue is just too much . . . I am sure there are others who agree that de Grandin is unjustifiably overdone."

The section of Mr. Jan's comments

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which we deleted does not deal with de Grandin; he asks for more of Joseph Payne Brennan and E. Hoffmann Price and suggests Carl Jacobi. (We shall do what we can do fulfill Reader Jan's requests; others have named these authors, too.) And he is right; there are others who agree, so that we must ask the majority to be tolerant and go along with us on our decision not to present de Grandin in *every* issue of SMS. But we must also ask the minority to extend the same tolerance, and allow the majority to enjoy de Grandin frequently.

That majority is well spoken for by *David Charles Paskow*, who writes from Philadelphia, Penna.: "The Spring issue of SMS (#8) was a difficult issue to rate for a very happy reason—a surplus of excellent entries! The Quinn-de Grandin entry, besides being one of the series' haunting best, was enhanced by the portraits of de Grandin and Trowbridge from W. T. Then again, Edmond Hamilton (always a favorite universe saver with me) weaved his magic into the quite effective *The Three from the Tomb*. Then there was the Haywood story, and the Smith, *et cetera* . . .

"I enjoyed your editorial. I am fascinated by the preparation going into each issue; the sincerity on your part in searching out stories for SMS is part of what is making SMS (as well as FSF and MOH—migosh, I'm beginning to sound like an acronym

addict) a fan favorite. Keep them coming!"

Richard Grose, of Pleasant Ridge, Michigan, is in the minority position on our controversy, (mildly controversial, of course; were it truly controversial, then each appearance of the series would bring forth hundreds of letters) but not, as we shall see, fanatically so. He writes: "The best story in the spring SMS is C. A. Smith's *The Return of the Sorcerer* . . . I've read the piece elsewhere but the de Soto illustration enhances this superb yarn. There is a highly disquieting correlation between the quoted passage from the dread *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, and the quotation of the medieval scholar Boreas, which is brought to light by H. P. Lovecraft in his novel, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. It is of note that Joseph Curwen also made use of an Olaus Wormius copy of that fearful volume.

"*The Endocrine Monster* rates a '1' (Messrs Grose and Paskow both rated their favorite tales 'O' RAWL) because I found it interesting. *The Gray People* ties for first place due to that 'spectral' feeling it gave me.

"Although I've written some sharp comments in the past concerning Dr. de Grandin, I always bend over backwards in trying to be objective when rating his performance. However, I feel that *The White Lady of the Orphanage* is below par and thus rates a '3'.

"*And Then No More* . . . comes in fourth because it vaguely reminds me of many stories I've read (and pretty much forgotten) in *ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGA-*

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#2, Fall 1966: *The House of Horror*, Seabury Quinn; *The Men in Black*, John Brunner; *The Strange Case of Pascal*, Roger Eugene Ulmer; *The Witch Is Dead*, Edward D. Hoch; *Doctor Satan*, Paul Ernst; *The Secret of the City*, Terry Carr and Ted White; *The Street* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Scourge of B'Moth*, Betram Russell.

#3, Winter 1966/67: *The Inn of Terror*, Gaston Leroux; *The Other*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Door of Doom*, Hugh B. Cave; *A Matter of Breeding*, Ralph Hayes; *Esmerelda*, Rama Wells; *The Trial for Murder*, Chas. Dickens & Chas. Collins; *The Blood-Flower*, Seabury Quinn.

#4, Spring 1967: *The Tottenham Werewolf*, by August Derleth; *The Secret of Lost Valley*, by Robert E. Howard; *Medium For Justice*, by Victor Rousseau; *Si Urag Of The Tail*, by Oscar Cook; *The Temptation of Harringay*, by H. G. Wells; *The Tenants of Broussac*, by Seabury Quinn.

Order From Page 128

Did You Miss These

Issues Of

#5, Summer 1967: *The Gods of East and West*, Seabury Quinn; *The Council and The House* (verse), Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Behind the Curtain*, Leslie Jones; *A Game of Chess*, Robert Barr; *The Man From Nowhere*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Darkness on Fifth Avenue*, Murray Leinster.

#6, Fall 1967: *My Lady of the Tunnel*, Arthur J. Burks; *The Glass Floor*, Stephen King; *Death From Within*, Sterling S. Cramer; *A Vision* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Aim for Perfection*, Beverly Haaf; *The Dark Castle*, Marion Brandon; *Dona Diabla*, Anna Hunger; *The Druid's Shadow*, Seabury Quinn.

#7, Winter 1967/68: *The Bride of the Peacock*, E. Hoffmann Price; *Nice Old House*, Dona Tolson; *Those Who Seek*, August Derleth; *John Bartine's Watch*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Pet of Mrs. Lilith*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Man Who Chained the Lightning*, Paul Ernst.

#8, Spring 1968: *The White Lady Of The Orphanage*, Seabury Quinn; *The Gray People*, John Campbell Haywood; *And Then No More*, Jay Tyler; *The Endocrine Monster*, R. Anthony; *The Return of the Sorcerer*, Clark Ashton Smith; *The Thief From The Tomb*, Edmond Hamilton.

#9, Summer 1968: *The Black Mass*, Col. S. P. Meek; *The Last Archer*, Earl Peirce, Jr.; *The Sight of Roses*, Jay Tyler; *Webbed Hands*, Ferdinand Berthoud; *Acrophobia* (verse), L. Sprague de Camp; *Hollywood Horror*, Paul Ernst.

ZINE. I did find it entertaining, however.

"*The Three from the Tomb* rates a '2' because, despite the presence of some good elements, it somewhat never caught fire for me.

"By the way, I think Farnsworth Wright would have considered the cover illustration for *CASKET AND SUNNYSIDE* in the long ago when he was editor."

Gene D. D'Orsogna, who also found our Spring issue among the best, writes from Stony Brook, New York: "*The White Lady of the Orphanage* I must rank with the very best of Quinn's de Grandin tales. Although the denouement wasn't based on any psychic phenomenon, it was indeed powerful. Quinn's superb imagery was never better. I shudder yet at visualizing Mother Martin 'enveloped from throat to knees in a commodious apron'.

"Quinn's supporting characters were more vivid than usual, also. Perhaps I am out on a limb, but I can just see the late Franklin Pangborn cast as the fluttery Gervaise.

"Running a very close second to the *White Lady* was Smith's *The Return of the Sorcerer*. It is really good to read a Smith tale in which he does not mumble any unpronounceable names! I found that August Derleth's *Trial of Cthulhu* bore many structural resemblances to this tale. The de Soto illustration was quite good: suspenseful, without revealing anything vital.

"*The Three from the Tomb* was fast reading, but nonetheless interesting. The stereotypes of the hotshot detective and the fumbling reporter sort of irked me, though.

"In *The Endocrine Monster*, I found a fascinating postulate (the solution to Bonita's phenomenal strength) couched in hackneyed, stilted prose. Added to this was the usually awkward device of a story-within-a-story, which weakened much of the suspense for me. However, for the fascinating, thought-provoking climax, I must rate it a '3'.

"*And Then No More . . .*" was a very fine piece of fiction, obviously carefully wrought. It was buried, however, beneath the sheer literary impetus of Quinn, Smith, and Hamilton. It is hard indeed to compete with proven excellence, unless one comes up with something really profound."

A reader whose name was lost through my own fault, since I have not yet broken myself of the habit of throwing away the envelopes containing preference pages, and then realizing that this one wasn't signed (and there is no obligation on anyone to sign preference pages), writes:

"I was disappointed in the portraits of de Grandin and Trowbridge—had always thought of them as being younger, but guess they couldn't be with all that experience behind them . . .

"I heartily concur with readers who want the longer de Grandin stories, but feel that serialization in a quarterly publication is too long between installments, as well as the fact that your distribution in this area at least, is so sporadic that one cannot be sure of obtaining the next issue."

To return to Friend D'Orsogna for a moment, I agree that the late

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What Was The Meaning Of The Strange Disappearances?

"You met someone with the same notions?" asked my colleague.

He shook his head. "No, not exactly the same, but it was a lot like it. He was a little under the weather, and I helped him to a bus.

"He claimed he saw people flying around the News and Chanin buildings. They didn't have any wings—they were just jumping up into the air, he said. He said he was walking along and he looked up suddenly and there they were leaping from one of the windows of the building—I forgot to ask him which. He was plenty scared, he says, but in an instant he saw that they weren't falling at all. They were soaring up, if you please . . ."

Don't Miss

LEAPERS

by Robert A. W. Lowndes

in the September issue of

**MAGAZINE OF
HORROR**

see page 125

Franklin Pangborn would have been perfectly cast as Gervaise in *The White Lady of the Orphanage*. But who would have played de Grandin? The late Joseph Schildkraut would have projected the feeling perfectly, but unless my memory has betrayed me yet again, he was too tall. The late Henry Stephenson would have projected the feeling of Dr. Trowbridge perfectly, too—but he was too old at that time.

In relation to the pictures of de Grandin and Trowbridge, I gingerly present the following missive from Paris. Dr. J. A. S. Poilsporte writes: "Cher M. Lowndes: Myself and my colleagues here at the Surete received with delight your reprint of the so magnificent drawings that the estimable M. Finlay drew of our beloved comrade emeritus, Dr. Jules de Grandin and his loyal if somehow obtuse associate, Dr. Trowbridge. But, we ask you in puzzlement, was it appropriate to present them along with the affair of the Orphanage? This, surely you will recall, took place in 1927, while the photographs from which M. Finlay drew his portraits were obviously taken around 1937, at the time that the admirable M. Quinn wrote up the case of the Palimpsest, ten years later, you surely see. I doubt me not that you will receive bewildered letters from your discerning readers."

Before such impregnable Gallic logic, we must bow. But to get back to our doubtless unintentionally anonymous commentator (whose objections to the pictures make a certain amount of sense in relation to the affair of the Orphanage) we shall

not reprint *The Devil's Bride* in *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*; three months, *parbleu*, is just too long to wait between installments. However, we shall publish that novel in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, if the readers' response to our poll indicates that a majority are eager to see it, even in three installments, two months apart each—actually the same amount of time I had to wait back in 1932 when I first read it in six installments, one month apart.

All of us here groan, some blas-

pheme, and others beat their hands against the wall, etc., at the distribution situation, then we try again to get some sort of improvement. But the fact is that *all* the magazines of fantasy and/or science fiction have a low circulation in relation to such masterpieces of contemporary culture as *T. V. GUIDE*, *READERS DIGEST*, etc., and wholesalers show a persistent reluctance to bother. However . . . a subscription would solve your problem, would it not? RAWL

THE EDITOR'S PAGE (Continued from page 5)

X "An Epilogue of Sherlock Holmes" (Sunday, August 2, 1914.)

The set closes with two brief appendices and "Some of the Writings about the Writings", a selected bibliography that runs to 18 pages.

I have had the opportunity thus far to read only Section I, which runs to 104 pages, but eagerly look forward to the rest. What is there about the tales which has aroused not only such enthusiasm and pleasure in the casual reader, but has spurred the close reader to activities which can be compared only to the behavior (in part) of science fiction fans? The Baker Street Irregulars (founded in 1934 by Christopher Morley) and the many other Sherlock Holmes clubs over the country and throughout the world, indulge in correspondence, meetings, and indefatigable writings about the writings. As Morley noted some years

back, "Never has so much been written by so many for so few."

No explanation is needed for the fact that continuing thousands are being introduced to the Sherlock Holmes tales every year, and a fair percentage of them will cherish the tales and want to re-read them, or some of them, ever after. This much can be granted to a long list of authors and a fair list of characters: there is a society dedicated to Conan, the Barbarian (the creation of Robert E. Howard), which publishes a magazine dedicated to writings about these writings; and just as pastiches of the Sherlock Holmes stories have been written from the earliest days (some when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was still alive, and was still to write further adventures of Holmes and Watson), new or partly-new tales of Conan the Barbarian are still being produced. We hear of a society

Has There Ever Been Such A Thing As A Natural Flyer?

With the exception of Ken Morey there was only one man in Ethiopia who could fly. And there was only one man in the world crazy enough to attempt suicide in a pursuit ship he had never flown, and which he could never land. That man was Jefferson Rolfe. And Morey knew that Rolfe was in the cockpit of the Wasp, climbing up and up to meet the threat of the enemy bombers.

High above, still concealed by the darkness, the enemy bombing formation dived earthward. They came with the complete contempt of men who know well that nothing can oppose them or do them harm. They dived in formation. The thin note of the multi-motors became a shrill screaming. They were over the city — down under five thousand feet. They were suddenly visible. They grew wings out of the blackness. They assumed shape.

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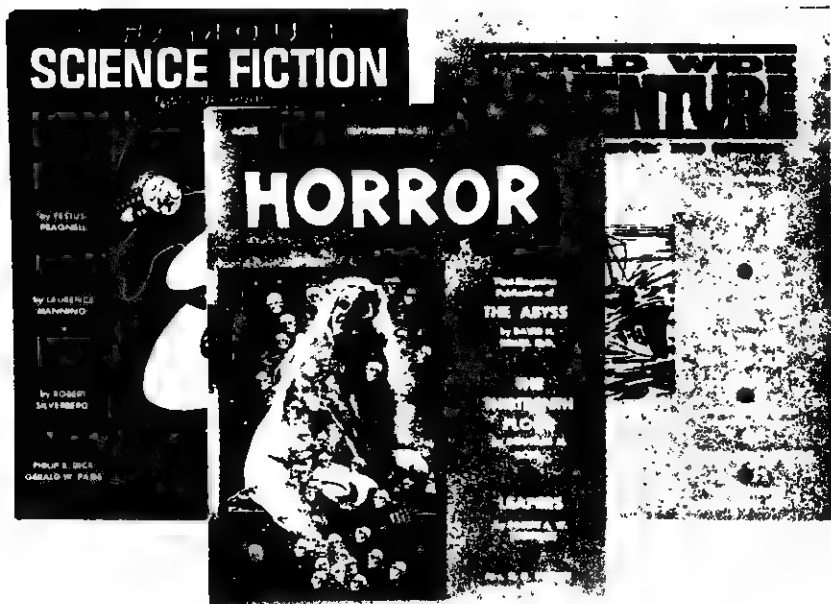
complete in Issue #4 of

WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE

see page 125

dedicated to Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and just recently some of the admirers of James Branch Caball have founded a very fine little magazine called *Kalki*, which consists of writings about Cabell's writings. What then is there in the Sherlock Holmes tales which has inspired studies which required not only close reading and study of the tales, but often highly erudite investigations of minor aspects of this or that tale? How did it all start?

I can only suggest. But it seems to me that it all really started when Fr. Ronald Knox, in serious pique at some of the nonsense that passed for "higher criticism" of Biblical texts, was led by his very lively sense of humor to remark that the methods employed by these pundits could be used just as efficiently and meaningfully when applied to the stories about Sherlock Holmes. This was before the Great War, when roughly no more than two thirds of the stories had been published. To prove his point, Fr. Knox wrote an essay, *Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes*, which was published in 1912 in *The Oxford Blue Book*, and was reprinted in *Essays in Satire*, Sheed & Ward, London, 1928, and privately here in *The Incunabular Sherlock Holmes*, by the Baker Street Irregulars in 1958. This was not, by any means, the first "fan article" on the subject to appear in the public press: The last volume listed above has three short bits published in 1902, one in 1903, and two in 1905, preceding the Knox study; but I suspect that it was the first essay to use the full apparatus of literary criticism and scholarship on the subject, thus indicating that



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Although the September issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* has been on sale but a short time as we write this, the response to part one of this short novel has been astonishing. We really expected letters of protest from readers who thought it too horrible, too much like the reality of today's upheavals in the cities. But all have commended us!

It was first published in 1948, in a limited book edition, which turned out to be still more limited than the publisher had intended, due to the loss of thousands of unbound sheets. It was written in 1947, and has never appeared in any magazine before.

Don't Miss

THE ABYSS

by David H. Keller, M.D.

in the September issue of

MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

see page 125

there was enough to be found in the stories to merit such profound fan activity.

For while the stories themselves arouse fascination, it is partly the little delinquencies of Dr. Watson and The Agent (as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is referred to by BSI members, etc.) that make such research rewarding. Not only did Watson take the greatest pains to conceal names, dates, and places—sometimes by ingenious disguises, other times by rather transparent ones—but he did not make any effort to achieve consistency throughout the cases by taking careful note of what he had written earlier when starting on a new account. We must allow that many inconsistencies and errors are intentional; but surely some are inadvertent and some show faulty memory.

One reason why there are so many (relatively speaking, of course; more absolutely, there are few) different chronologies of the cases of Sherlock Holmes is that, in some instances, Watson's cleverness and carelessness combine to baffle the most painstaking searcher. All the cases took place in times where daily newspapers published weather notices; Watson speaks frequently about weather in all the stories, and will also mention such things as the degree of darkness at a certain hour of night, the visibility or nonvisibility of the moon, etc. And the stories include perfectly straightforward contemporary references at times which give unambiguous clues. So if a year is mentioned, for example, and a rainy Saturday is mentioned, followed by a Sunday night when it was completely dark at 2 A. M., then we have a clue;

check the *London Times* for rainy Saturdays (but first check the almanac for the phases of the moon, having noted whether Watson has given any indications of the season. He hasn't? Are you sure? How were he and Holmes dressed when went out? They didn't go out—they were just watching from a window? Very well, then: is there any mention of heat—fireplace, gas—in the room where they are watching?) and we may be able to get some possible dates. By this sort of activity, it is possible to date some of the stories exactly; everything fits. Others present problems of varying degrees.

In the introduction to his *Chronological Holmes*, Mr. Baring-Gould lists the types of evidence to be found in the Canon, in the order in which they should be used. (1) Direct quotations from Sherlock Holmes—his conversations and his writings. (2) Quotations from newspaper clippings, letters, official police notebooks, reference works, etc. (3) Watsonian statements that can be corroborated by evidence in the Canon itself. (4) Watsonian statements that can be dated, documented or authenticated by outside sources. (5) Unverifiable, uncorroborated statements by Watson. And to this, the author adds in a footnote: "Dr. Zeisler would suggest—and I approve—the addition of one other canon (or Conan): 'In case no date is free from objection that date is to be preferred to which the obstacles are least. ('The Principle of Least Difficulty')'"

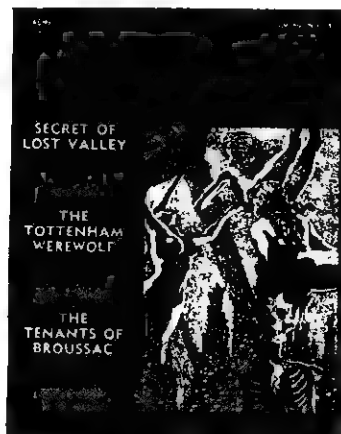
And he also states: "It is distressing to any lover of Sherlock Holmes to note (as *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* noted recently) that five of

the six chronologists who have attempted to date all sixty of the Master's cases should have come to complete agreement (i. e., agreement as to year, month, dates of the month and days of the week) only once: The five believe that the adventure recounted in 'His Last Bow' took place on Sunday, August 2, 1914." He doesn't say which, if any, of the five employed the criteria listed above.

This just offers one possibility for study into the conan; the other questions and riddles which close reading raises have so far proved to be inexhaustible as to possible number, and they cover the entire range from whimsy to earnest literary detection.

One can object, in reference to the rules Mr. Baring-Gould has adopted, and which is valid for any question or riddle (not only dates) relating to the stories, that Holmes himself could err and that newspapers are less than 100% reliable. True. But a game has to have rules, and one does not really win by ignoring or overturning them; one merely ruins the game. Just as one needs to accept a certain amount of what the author of a science fiction tale tells us as "given", in order to enjoy his story, we must accept Holmes' statements as reliable; and I should say that newspaper quotations can likewise be accepted where there is no better evidence to the contrary.

So if you have enduring fondness for Holmes and Watson, and these notes have aroused your interest, then you cannot do better than to save up (if you do not have the price handy) and invest in this handsome set of books; you'll find that The Game is Afoot. RAWL.



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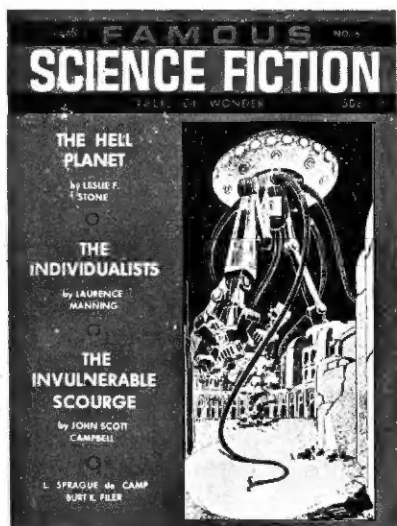
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